

Art by Michael Orozco



Dear life, where have you went? Where are you? We used to always be together, be one, and have the most of fun. But it feels like you're gone now, and I no longer feel alive. I remember the first day I started feeling this way, the date when you ran away. . .

check out the rest of Drew's POW on page 7

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 1.22+

Hello Beat readers, you are in store for yet another powerful issue plus of The Beat Within, meaning you not only get the writings from issue 1.22 but you also get the remaining pieces that were not included from issue 1.21! And that's not all, brace yourself for an onslaught of BWO pieces! We just finished reading this issue and we have to say how moved we are by many, many of your truths! Thank you writers for believing in yourselves. Putting your thoughts to paper takes great courage in such a place, a place whose stated purpose is to help you, but tragically has scarred too many young people and made life much worse.

We'd like to start this issue off by sharing a few poems with you readers, that we shared in a couple of our classes last week, from a few hall of fame writers of The Beat Within, who we so happened to meet and work with for over two years while their very serious cases were pending in the Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall.

The first writer is Dwayne the Knowledge aka Dwayne Choatee. We first met Dwayne when he was putting it down really hard from max unit B9, not just as a writer but a courageous reader of his pieces too. But in time the system moved this Beat leader to the neighboring max unit, B8, where he continued to flourish as a writer, who by the way always wrote on topic, regardless. Dwayne could turn a stale "not feeling it" type of topic into something so fresh and raw it would have your head spinning.

When Dwayne first stepped up in B9, he also shared the floor with another legendary Beat writer who very few probably heard of. His name in The Beat was Baby A, aka Shawn Rogers. Like we said, both of these fine writers/ teachers were tried as adults by the courts, and upon hitting the ripe age of 18, were sent off to prison, Dwayne to do, we believe, 17 years, and Shawn, if we're not mistaken, 25 years.

We still occasionally hear from these two young men, but not nearly as regularly as we would like. If they are out there, or you know them, get in touch with us and let us know how you are doing! Well, both these guys fed off each other's skills as writers and teachers, and in many ways competed with, yet supported, one another in each piece they spat on our pages. Their skills as poets/writers were so contagious that all readers of The Beat looked forward to their writings each week, inspiring many, many more writers to write their flows and stories like their lives depended on it too.

What do you say we get to the pieces!? All right first up is Dwayne's very powerful on-topic poem...

"My Distinguishing Marks"
my distinguishing marks
come from thugs that come out in the dark
got one from a 15-year-old boy when I was seven years old being hard
im 16 years old and still remember the day i got hit
sticking up for my 12-year-old sister, got me hit with a brick
a scar on my back from a broken broomstick
got scars from barbed-wire on my wrist
had to run after pulling a lick
was running from the police and cut it going over a fence
got cut over my left eye at a party fighting bent
not all my scars come from wars though
not all my scars come from doing something illegal
some scars came from being a kid
getting beat with a belt for being suspended
or getting stole on for something bad i did
and one of my scars i was actually born with
got one on my chest from a knife i got sliced with
my dad did it to me, pops was straight wicked
my most distinguishing mark
you can only see at certain times
when i feel pain, anger, when someone tells me a lie
or plays with my mind
this distinguishing mark is seen in my eyes
when you see it, it's a signal or giveaway of all the rage i have built up
inside,
from all the nights when i was a kid and because i was hungry i laid in bed
and cried
from being taken from my mother by a social worker that lied,
from seeing my cousin's chest wide
open from a 12-gauge blast in a drive-by
from going to so many funerals,
when i now go, i don't cry
from living life in pain, away from light, in a place that's dark.
it's where, when, and how i received my distinguishing marks
-Dwayne the Knowledge

Now lets get to Baby A aka Shawn Roger's piece! We could have dropped his juvenile hall pieces, but this one he wrote from Pelican Bay State Prison speaks volumes, yes indeed volumes! Here it is...

"Rewinding The Hands of Time"
Rewind back to San Quentin
Before I transferred to Pelican Bay.
Rewind back to County Jail, where the
Judge took my life away.
Rewind back to my trial, facing 25 to life
I took a chance.
Rewind back to me accepting responsibility
For my foolish actions with a warrior's stance
Rewind back to Juvenile Hall, a precocious kid
In a man's body.
Rewind back to that cold night I
Fired the heat on somebody.
On that night, picture my aggression
My desires, my fears — my gangsterism
Manifested, my essence is clear.
Rewind back to me being a follower
Instead of taking the position to lead.
Rewind back to my alcoholism, my head
Spins while my liver bleeds.
Rewind back to my inauguration
Joining a gang was my worst mistake, but my
Level of thugitry had to enhance —
Subconsciously I accommodated the hands of fate.
Rewind back to me putting my so-called
Friends before my family, not yet realizing
That family love is everlasting — love from
My friends come sporadically.
Rewind back to my childhood years
Virgin eyes penetrated — I cried, but no

One listened. I guess my tears were underrated.
Rewind back to my birth who knew what my
Future would behold — now fast forward to reality
I reap what I sowed.
-Shawn Rogers

What can we say — except Wow!? These two pieces speak for themselves. If anything, we hope it only pushes you to take a better look at yourself and to see your life as the gift you truly are. If you are going home soon, hopefully the pieces will help inspire you to be the best person you can possibly be!

OK, now for the topics at hand! The following are the 11.22 topics that were discussed prior to the excellent writing you are about to read. The first topic, the very real, "A Letter To My Grandchild"

We always find it interesting to see what having a son or daughter does to your outlook on life. For reasons that aren't clear to us, most of you seem to get very serious about your futures once you bring a new life into this world — more serious than you are about your own lives.

Many of you are already parents or are about to be, but none of you is a grandparent yet.. So now we want you to think not of the next generation, but of the one that comes after — the generation of your grandchildren. We would like you to imagine that little boy or little girl, the children of your children, and think about what you would like to tell them about who you are... or who you were. Do you want to tell them only about the life you lived (and may still be living), or do you also want to tell them about the life you hope they live — the things you want them to achieve in their lives, and the things you want them to avoid? Remember, you're writing to a child, not an adult. Think a little bit about this topic before you put pencil to paper, then begin a letter: "Dear Grandson..." or "Dear Granddaughter..."

Our second topic, "When it's cold outside, how do you stay warm?" In every issue of The Beat — every week, every month, every year — we read about how cold your lives can be. Sometimes it's because your family puts you down. Sometimes it's because things have just gone wrong, and you can't figure out a way back. Sometimes, it's just being locked up and lonely that makes you feel that way. And sometimes, it's just being a human being who is growing — a feeling that all of us have experienced at one time or another, often when we were teenagers like you.

What we want to know is: How do you comfort yourself when you're feeling that way? How do you stay strong and keep standing when those you trust turn their backs on you?

The nights can be the worst times of all, because then you are alone with your thoughts. Do you call up memories from your head to make you warm? Do you just pull the blankets up tighter around your neck? Do you tell yourself that you will make it, despite the cold?

We would like you to consider some of the methods you have developed for comforting yourselves — from drugs to revenge — and ask yourself if they have served you well, or poorly. Have they provided you the comfort you sought, or only led to more cold? Have you considered other strategies than the ones you've relied on in the past? Like what?

And our last topic for 1.22, "Dear Life..." Almost forgot the 11.21 topics, given there is a host of 11.21 pieces in this issue, so allow us to share with you these topics! If You Didn't Have To Worry About Money, What Would You Do And/or Worry About? Everybody is constantly moving and in traffic for the need (or desire) to get money. But if you didn't have to worry about money, then what would you do think you'll be worrying about? Would you just lay around the house all day? Would you go shopping all the time? Would you try to give back and help? Do volunteer work? Become a community activist or political worker? Everybody's talking 'bout how they getting money, so if that wasn't in the picture, what would you do, how would you spend your time, and/or what will you be worrying about?

The second topic, "Message To Your People"—The inspiration for this week's topic comes from an episode of a cartoon called "The Boondocks." One episode was based on a thought: What if Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. hadn't died, but was just in a coma and woke up in the 21st century? In this episode, Dr. King went on to deliver a powerful message about the state of his African-American people and how many were not doing the positive things he had envisioned for his people.

With that said, if you had the opportunity to deliver a message to your people, what would you say? Your people can be your family, your 'hood, your nationality or race, and/or the entire human race. Would your message be a positive one, like the one Dr. King delivered, or would you urge "your people" to get theirs however they can and never mind the consequences? Take this opportunity to send a message to your people and let them know what's on your mind — and be as specific as you can with your message.

And the last topic, "My Momma..." Knowing the topics, let's give praise to this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients! Big shout outs and gratitude go out to Brandon from SF/ YGC, Karee and Lil' Chuch from Marin, and from the 150 Crew we have Rae, Eugene, Brandi, Ford, Big Vic, Young Tay, Drew, Brandon, and Wayne.

All right readers, you all know the scoop from this editor's note, now it's on you to keep the ball rolling — hopefully down a better more positive path too!

This issue goes out to all you writers who are serious to changing your lives for the better! We support you! You all are so courageous, 'cause the journey to a better life is going to take plenty of hard work. Don't give up! We need you to be a part of the solution, 'cause what you have been doing to get here (in the Hall or beyond) is not working! If you haven't started the next chapter, start today and title the chapter, "Change."

We also want to send this issue out to our old friend Russell Morse who has made a huge change in his life. Once upon a time he too was a likeable participant in our weekly workshops up in SF/YGC (fighting to get his freedom back) when he went by the name Jiver. From SF/YGC he was sent to Walden House (Drug Rehab), where we maintained and continued our relationship. Well, as The Beat does with many writers, we encouraged him to come down to work and that he did, first as a typist and soon a facilitator. He slowly and with the help of The Beat became a writer for our neighboring publication YO! (Youth Outlook).

Russell soon became a real prime time player/voice for YO! while attending college, and today he is off to New York City to start a summer internship with Rolling Stone Magazine. Not only will he be an intern at Rolling Stone, he is one of the handful of interns that will be featured on MTV! Yes, Russell's life will be shown in ten episodes this summer on MTV as a Rolling Stone intern reality show! We learned he was one of six thousand entries and our man and a few others across this great land were picked. Who knows where our old friend will go with this. We wish him great success with his life. And we say all this because Russell, like you, was once in the hall too, and today he is having his young life filmed by MTV. Too much! Yet we look forward to seeing him on the tube. Maybe he'll drop The Beat's name on national TV too!!!!

See you next week friends! Best to you all!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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EDITOR'S NOTE	2
PIECES OF THE WEEK	4
CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK	9
STANDOUTS	13
VOICES IN SPANISH	29
WEEKLY WRITINGS	31
THE BEAT WITHOUT	56



To Be Lonely

What's up wit' it, my enchanting people. It's simple saying everybody's beautiful in some way. Remember that. Anyways, I believe last time I wrote, it was because of love, or maybe desire. Today I gotta talk about loneliness — only in prison of ourselves.

Last time I wrote about love. these dudes in here blew out air, smackin' they lips and fussin'. I mean that tells me they either broken or they just hating the whole situation. 'Cause ain't no dude in the world don't have emotions. I know 'cause I watched ninjas cry about being in here. But I'm off the subject. I'm talking about loneliness, because everybody becomes alone in the mind, and that's why there's this sorrow of loneliness.

I'm sure everybody been lonely, but if you don't remember, I'll remind you what it's like. It when you suddenly realize that you have no relations with anybody — and this loneliness is a form of death. I'm saying there's dying not only when life comes to an end, but when there's no answer; I guess, there ain't no way out. All I know is, I become lonely more and more in my life. That is a form of death. Being incomplete hurts any human's soul, to be honest, animals too, being in the prison of your own humans soul, to be honest, animals too! Being in the prison of your own self-centered activity, endlessly — that's loneliness. When we're caught in our own thoughts, in our own agony, in our own superstitions, in our own deadly, daily routine of habit and thoughtlessness — that is also death. Death is not just the ending of the body.

And how to end loneliness, one must also find out. Is the ending of sorrow is possible? I mean could tears become rain? All the crying I did being alone, yeah, with all the raining I experienced in March, I'd have to say, I believe so — tears can become rain, it's a fact. Now, to understand the self, if you sit down and shed memories, it all equals to missing someone or something. Being alone can bring about a radical resolution, a regeneration of a different loneliness. The progress of the individual is, you yourself, opposed to the world. There is no mass apart from you; you are the mass. If you really think about it, if we observe our own ways, we will see that we do nothing but follow somebody or other. If we were not following somebody, then how did we end up the persons we are now?

It's simple if we follow our footsteps, the footsteps of our soul, we will be led to complete freedom. But how we do that? I really can't explain that part. All I know is a soul mate could shadow your soul's first steps. On the real, we want to be told what to do. We are exploited by guns, spiritual as well as scientific. We only know the significance of life as long as we are copying, imitating and following. I want to know how we can know the significance of life when all that one is seeking is success? That's what everybody likes. We want success. We failed plenty of times, but the question is — when will we have success? We want to be completely secure, inwardly and outwardly. We want somebody to tell us that we are doing better. We want somebody telling us, "You're doing right," and we want to hear that we're following the right path, leading to salvation.

All our life is following a traditions, the tradition of yesterday or of thousands of years before. We make every experience into an authority, to help us achieve a result. So we don't know the significance of life. All we know is fear. I don't care what any female or dude says, we are consumed with fear of losing something, fear of what somebody says, fear of dying, fear of not getting what we want, fear of committing wrongs, fear of doing good. Our minds are so confused, caught in theory, that we cannot describe, what significance life has to us. It's living to dream that our lives won't be, can't be, alone. If you read, you're there with that person, writing along with them. There's so many ways for us to always be near someone or other. I know the way I be speakin' is a lil' squarish, but shhh the way I see it, squares ruling the world, man!

Being lonely could make you cry, and I wonder if being alone will always be that way. I found out you could only be alone if you leave yourself behind, which is to say, if losing somebody makes you be alone, then you're sorry. But you couldn't even be alone unless you'd already lost yourself. And if you did lose yourself, then somebody found you — me! And I'm willing to bring you back safe and sound from your loneliness. Anyways, y'all know who it be, it's ya boy, Lil' Mainy!

One mo' thang: Being is exact, so let dreams continue while life promises the end. Au revoir! That's French for: "until I see you again" — and I will see you soon again in these pages. While dreams come true, let words become for you a definition of fulfilled desire.

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, there are many ways to fight off that feeling of loneliness, whether you are in a cell or in a crowded room feeling all alone and left out. And, indeed, reading is one important way of connecting with another. In that sense, all writing in The Beat is indeed a gift, an offering, a meeting place where one-to-one connection reader-to-writer can be felt. As powerful as that connection is, and as important as it is not to feel the despair of being completely alone in a world where it seems no one else cares or understands you — being alone is not the same thing as being lonely. What is more, we may need alone time to take a look at ourselves, our past, what we have done and not done, who we were with and not with — look at the opinions we held that shaped our actions and decisions in a life that led us here. The down side of taking responsibility for our actions, is that we can feel deep shame and/or guilt, but the up side is that it empowers us to take responsibility for ourselves. When we realize the only person whose life we really have power over is our own, then being alone, we can imagine who we really want to be, what we really want to do, where we really want to be and how to be that person, do that thing, and get to that place — that we want. Dreams can serve as a motivation and a support in a difficult time, but we can also hide from reality in dreams and deny ourselves the tools we need to solve our own problems, face the face in the mirror and accept it as our own. As we gaze alone into our own eyes we might repeat the Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Cheesin'

The saddest thing I own is my life. But then again my life could be taken as if I didn't own it. My life for me the last seven years has been a constant cycle of death and traumatizing experiences.

It was not always like that, but as I got older it seems like it's gotten worse.

As a young child I was always happy no matter what. I was happy being with my family. We were very poor but I was always cheesin' and smilin' 'cause I was not aware what life had in store for me: Jail times and setups is what I been livin' and sometimes I feel like ending it all to make a long story short.

I keep grounded and stand tall, some things are sad no matter what but my life it really hurts and that's why the saddest thing I own is my life.

-Eugene, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is deep, and moving too. You know what though? Maybe if you were smiling then because you didn't know what was in store... you could be feeling low now because you still don't know what life is for. Since life surprised you once, she can do it again. They say bad luck comes in 7 year shifts. You may be ready for the next one. What have all these bad experiences been? What led you from then to now? And what comes next?

Being lonely could make you cry, and

I wonder if being alone
will always be that way.

Confessions Of A Graf Writer

"Ay, Rae, you know they buffed the tunnel between Bayfair BART and Hayward BART." My long time partner Giver said when he called me at my house.

"For real, the one that's covered so bad you gotta go over somebody to get a hit up" I said hella happy.

Giver said "Yup I seen it when I was going to court this morning. You down?"

I was laughing when I heard "You down?" 'cause Giver, who had the same name as me, Raymond, was my partner in crime. I met Give when he first moved from Union City to San Leandro in like 2000 or early 2001. We done so many crimes in SL (San Leandro), it was funny to hear "Are You Down."

I said "I'm 'bout to come through right now" and hung up and left my house, which was a five minute walk to his house around the corner. When I got there we planned what we were gonna do, cause we didn't have any cans (spray paint) or money to get on BART. But really, that wasn't an issue cause we were like stealing flends and snuck on BART almost very day without even trying.

By the way, this story is like four-years-old... So we left his house enroute to San Leandro BART. On the way we took a couple hits of Mary Jane and bumped our CD players 'till we got to the BART Station. We snuck on BART as easy as I said it was and snuck off at Bayfair as easy as getting on. Our next destination was Michael's Art Supply Store, right near Bayfair Mall next to Ross and the Dollar Tree. We both had backpacks on so I told him to stash his in the back of the store with our CD players and markers, caps, CD case with hella CD's, plastic gloves, my beanie, and like a ten sack of weed in it, you know, the usual stuff that's in a graffiti writer's backpack.

So I had my backpack on and we did our usual routine. I went to the spray-paint section with my bag half-zipped and he met me there and took cans out of the bent cage they had so you couldn't steal them so easy and started shoving them in my half zipped bag till we thought it was enough. Then I would just walk out like nothin' happened to the back of the store. Our record was 21 cans with two trips in and out so we were good at what we did. We stole everything from alcohol to clothing and even school supplies for us or our siblings some days.

But back to the story, we came up with like nine or something cans that time and had a clean getaway back to Bayfair BART. We chilled there till it got dark and hit some ganja and looked for some girls our age, but couldn't find none, and we got restless and decided it was time to go paint the tunnel we started our mission for.

But the only thing that was bad was that we left a little too early, cause it wasn't dark yet but it was like cloudy and the sky was gray. It was cold as ice too all I had was a beanie, one white tee, and some khaki shorts with my Adidas that I wore to go paint so I wouldn't mess with my other kicks. When we left it started to drizzle a little bit but the spot was under a tunnel so it was all good. We walked on the tracks next to the BART tracks till we got to the legendary tunnel that before the city painted it new was destroyed and covered with graffiti all over, even way high up. Some writers brought ladders to get where other writers couldn't reach. Back then that was the spot to claim some fame, even to this day it still is one of the best spots in the San Leandro area.

The reason is because BART rides right next to the walls when going to Hayward or Castro Valley. But back to the story we got under the tunnel and picked a spot to paint. We put our backpacks down and started our work. I did a coo' piece that said Semser, and Giver was doing his piece but was taking hella long so I finished and sat down and was talking to a hobo that lived down there cause he was interested in what we were doing. We were suppose to duck

when the BART trains rode by but give we wasn't trippin' and thought it was coo' so he said "Forget it, I'm tryin' to finish this and be out."

Are y'all still with me Beat readers?

OK at that point we looked to the left and seen two police officers running at us, I mean full speed track star stature. There was a fence next to our spot, we were painting but there was no bar across the top so it was hard to jump it. But my boy Giver was over it in a second and so was I literally climbed on his back because the fence was small and we reacted at the same time. But I fell off him and just threw myself over it.

Then we were running up a dirt hill and when we got to the top of it we were in between two freeways. I said freeways!

So we jumped over the barriers and started running towards the exit that was at least 100 yards away. Giver said "Don't look back" but I did anyways and sure enough I seen the two cops way behind us, but they weren't giving up.

Giver was out on me, I thought he was gonna leave me behind, but I caught up to him. We looked back and they were behind us. When we finally came close to the exit it was time to cross the freeway but there was hella cars coming so we took our chance and sprinted across and made it to the other side, then a big 18 wheel drove right past us as we got to the shoulder lane but we were safe. The exit was by John Muir Middle School but before we got there we ran down another dirt hill and as I was coming down I tripped and made full roll and somehow kept running, we ran into the school and hid for like thirty minutes or so.

I swear it felt like I was spitting out blood 'cause we were running for what seemed like hours. We left both our backpacks there with all our supplies and were heated 'cause we lost our CD players with all our CD's. When we decided to leave, and we had to walk all the way to the other side of San Leandro. Where we live is the downtown side, so that's like a forty-five minute walk and after you ran from the boys (cops) you're paranoid and tired so that made it worse. But we made it and went our separate ways. When we got to Memorial Park, the separation between my path and his, I said "What you 'bout to do tomorrow?" He said, "I don't know, you wanna go paint?" with a big smile on his face.

For the first time I was gonna back down but changed my mind and said "I'll hit you up before school tomorrow."

With that we split and walked home.

I was glad I didn't get arrested, 'cause I just got out of here for my first robbery case and was going to trial for it. I ended up beating it but came back twelve more times for other hot shhh and now four years later I'm waiting to go to CYA for three years.

Giver caught some cases but never ended up here for a long time. He eventually started selling weed and we both slowed down on graffiti. We just smoked and smoked and cut school and smoked 'till we just dropped out forever.

He decided to go the good route and moved to Vacaville and finished school playing football and got some kind of job. Me, I'm 'bout to do some time and return to the streets the same way I left it. But sometimes I ask myself, should I have went the good route? It's too late, but I wish I had now. For those still listening, I hope you liked my story 'cause this is the longest one I wrote in my life and maybe the last. Thanks for your time. Sincerely...

-Rae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So are you ready to here what we think is the most heinous crime in this story? It hasn't even happened yet. And whether you commit that crime - which is a crime almost as bad as murder - is up to you. The crime is that there is a hope for your future in these pages, a master storyteller, an artist, an adventurer, a friend, an artist, a thinker behind every word. And yet you threaten to kill his future by saying "it's too late". Of course it's not too late. We know people who've served triple the amount of time you're about to do, and come out of it ready to seize life and make something of it. Some became artists, others writers, others teachers, others a combination of all three. This story is brilliant and philosophical and action packed...don't give up on the young man who wrote it.

"I'm Going To Jail!"

Dear Life:

When I got rushed to the ground by the police, I had only one thought runnin' through my mind. One thing that keeps on repeatin', "Damn! I'm going to jail! Damn! I'm going to jail! Why me? I'm not a bad person. Why me?"

Then it hit me... I really am a criminal. All the bad things I've done. All the people I've hurt or robbed all for personal gain. My excuse for doing all the things I did was, "I need to eat too! I ain't selling dope so the police ain't trippin' off me." Wrong! Even though I said that, I still knew it wasn't true. Yet, every one of my so-called friends sat there and agreed wit' me because I was also their money. I was the one puttin' in all the work and they just do nothing. But in the end they sit around and say, "Oh, you saw what I did," or "I was lookin' out for the cops."

They're all liars and I'm not only a bad person, but also a stupid person to believe them. So now I'm sitting in jail and they walking the streets broke because their money, aka Psyco B, is in jail. So life, when I get out, I'ma treat you better because you don't need fake-ass friends. From now on you and me is on our own hype and stickin' to it, ya feel me.

-Brandon B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a wonderfully thought-out and well-written Declaration of Independence! Congratulations for a major accomplishment: stepping out of childhood and into adulthood! You are neither a bad person or a stupid one. You are a person brought up in a certain way around certain people who you understandably followed and modeled — until you started recognizing both the practical consequences (loss of freedom) and the moral consequences (it's wrong). In fact, judging from the passion of this fine piece of writing, we would describe you as both a good person and a smart one! Not all of us see through the nonsense our elders have taught us (along with their wisdom) at the same time, and some of us never see through it. So consider yourself a new person on a new path, and become the leader you are so obviously capable of becoming.

Undecided

No one's there when I want to open up.

No one wants to listen.

They say they do, but when I start to talk, they talk over me wanting to be listened to.

No matter how much I listen to others' problems, no one's there to listen to mine

I got God and paper to listen to me, and I appreciate it, I truly do. But I want somebody solid,

somebody who has eyes that can show my eyes, my mind, that somebody cares on this earth. This earth!

It's sad to have so many people in your life claiming to love you

but know you're totally and completely alone.

It's depressing really.

And I'd be a lie to say I don't think dark thoughts everyday.

That may be extreme to some people, but that's the way I feel.

-Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know it's not always enough, but you have real people right here, reading your words and feeling your thoughts. The thing about life and loved ones is that most people can't give all that they would like to because we all suffer with our own issues and shortcomings. It's really hard to accept this when we're feeling so sad and lonely in the world, especially when we try to be present and sensitive to everyone else's problems. Suicide is final—there's no going back, no time for regrets. It doesn't just end your own life, but also changes the lives of others. Try to remember that with all of the sadness in the world there lives hope and even beauty. Somewhere is an ear waiting to listen, arms waiting to hug.

Where I'm From

i'm from a place where ninjas die young
 where i'm from there's a bullet with your name on it
 where ninjas will funk over a dollar bill
 where dope fiends will try and swindle you
 where dope fiends steal from their family just to get high
 where we rock t-shirts of our ninjas that died
 where we don't care where you from or who you kin to
 and we will still pop you
 where pills is popped like candy
 and where grapes is blown every minute
 where the police are mischievous
 where dice games are a sport
 where rippers get ripped
 and boppas get bopped
 where the street is illuminated by the corner store
 and every ninja's in front of it
 where scrapers, cadillac, chevy and benz
 all with dumb ass slap and dubs
 or better innovate you when you're young
 where you can be broke and still be a star
 where a ninja wake up to the first knock that call
 where your feelings will get you killed
 where a ninja threw on a black hoody and pea coat and call
 it a day
 where not a single party ends without the interruption of
 gunshots
 where a ninja could care less about his atrocious acts
 upon someone who is loved by many
 where your best friend can turn into your worst enemy
 and the more money is made the more haters are made
 where ninjas is shady and smirky
 where ninjas is greedy and care just about theyself
 where ninjas will take the whole pie
 where ninjas free load continuously
 where ninjas pretend to be broke
 where the game-god is lord
 where snitches are killed unless they cut out
 where one falls in love with the street lights
 this place is like a black hole
 a place where i'm trying to get away from
 and stay away from
 and have no contact with

-Ford, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You had us worried when you wrote, "and we will still pop you." It sounded like you were buying into the madness you portray so vividly in this catalogue of (self-)destructive, dysfunctional behaviors, which yet has some surprising twists. Our favorite line comes just before you drop us down "a black hole" — and that's "where one falls in love with the street lights". That contrast alone, slams us hard into your conclusion, repeated in paraphrase over the last few lines, like a hammer banging on a nail till its sunk all the way in. We pray you are successful in escaping that life, and if it means escaping that neighborhood, then that, too. 'Cause based on where you are and what you write, you deserve to win your fight to break free of the street so you can stay free of the system and/or an early grave. Save yourself from the Game God, who demands human sacrifice and rivers of blood and names his favorites, killas. Thanks for a powerful poem that describes the horror of the streets our readers roam.

No one's there when I want to open up.

No one wants to listen.

They say they do, but when I start to talk,
 they talk over me wanting to be listened to

I Am Hungry

I need yo' money
I need yo' chain
I need yo' watch
I need yo' grill
I need yo' girl
I need yo' scraper
I need yo' rims
I need yo' speakers
I need yo' clothes
I need yo' Jordans
I need yo' guns
I need yo' meat
I need yo' family
I need yo' minds
I need yo' thoughts
In fact I need yo' life

-Young Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those of us who heard you read this poem aloud and remembered the passion you brought to it will never forget that moment. You read this as if you were calling out to the world to speak not just for yourself, but for any young person who has ever roamed the streets knowing they wanted more but not knowing how to get it. Starting with small things - money, rims, Jordans - and moving on to the big picture: family, minds, thoughts, life. ... The hunger in this poem is a hunger for more LIFE... more freedom, more joy, more of everything. How can that hunger be appeased? How will you find your way to more life?

Dad's Letter

When I'm feeling cold inside, I get real uncomfortable. It puts me in a position where sometimes I feel life is pointless, like I was born in the wrong time, like I'm not meant to be here. But I am here, I was born in this time, and my life won't be pointless. But at those times when I do feel like that, I turn and look to one thing: my dad's letter.

The last time I got locked up, my dad told me he would never talk to me again. All my life I felt as he has favored my older brother. He never really did much for me. My mom was the one who showed me love. My dad would just go to work, come home, watch TV, eat, then sleep. Whenever my older brother needed something, he gave it to him. I always had to go to my mom for something. So when I got locked up I wasn't expecting much from him.

I called my mom one day and she told me that she never seen him cry that much in her life. I got locked up two days before his birthday. So on his birthday, he came to visit me, and he had a letter with him. Later that night I opened the letter and read it. The things he said in it, showed so much emotion that I felt really bad for getting arrested. Every time I now have doubts about anything, I just look at his letter and realize that I got a father who would give his own life for mine.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a precious item, an inspiration to you and symbol of your father's love for you. And what a moving story you tell, getting locked up the day before your father's birthday and his birthday visit, with a gift for you - that most important letter. We know that you will go on to make your father proud of you in your life. We see so much promise in you, seriousness of purpose and clarity of insight, not to mention flat-out ability and intelligence. Your blessed to have a mother and father who love you, and we're glad you use that knowledge to give you a lift when you're feeling down.

Dear Life, I Need You

Dear life, where have you went? Where are you? We used to always be together, be one, and have the most of fun. But it feels like you're gone now, and I no longer feel alive. I remember the first day I started feeling this way, the date when you ran away: July 24, 2004.

Life, I no longer feel pain or happiness, and I don't feel like I have a sense of humor anymore. I'm just plain old Drew. In this place I can't feel, and I know you're not within me like you used to be. Life, when will you come back? When? I hope, as a matter of fact, I know that you'll come back when I get to visit my siblings and my future wife! When either one of them is present, you can't help but to be within me because we both feel special feelings for them. So, 'till then, life, don't go too far. I need you.

-Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is written with a honesty and insight, and yet it is also written so simply as to be almost brutal insofar as it tears at the heart of any reader who can feel what you're saying. And anyone who knows what it's like to be in a place like this for almost two years, or anyone who willing even to try to imagine it, will understand what you're saying - and that's what hurts. Still, you hold hope as close to you as the very real expectation of getting to see your loved ones on visiting days at CYA. Keep your head up and when you can, let your heart open, 'cause the old feeling of being alive that you seem to have lost is locked there in your heart along with pain, happiness and even a sense of humor. Thank God for your siblings and future wife - and for the future you intend to make with/for them. Much love and respect. We hope you get a copy of this issue in YA.

Mama's Love

My mama was addicted
But she never smoked crack
When I gave my love to her
She almost never gave it back
So we kept our distance
She thought we were different
Take a look at our faces
Can't you see the resemblance?
She couldn't show her affection
She avoided reflection
I thought of her
While I'm testin'
Why push me away?
Mama, why can't I stay?
Whatever it was that hurt you so bad
I didn't mean it
She said she's gotten over it now
But I ain't seen it
The way our family's suffering
Mama, it ain't right
Why weren't you there for me
When I cried at night?
I wish grandma was here
I bet she'd make it right
I'm afraid of my fears
My pillow soaked with tears
From having them bad dreams
It only seems
The right thing
If me and mama
Become a team!

-Karea, Marin

From The Beat: Terrific, amazing, sensitive, lonely, thoughtful, poem, Karea. Maybe no one can hurt a daughter more than her mother, and as well, no one can cause more huge pain to a mother than her child. Maybe she sees you growing from a child to a teenager and she doesn't quite know how to retune her relationship to the young woman you're becoming. You sound like you're trying everything you can to apologize for whatever hurt you've caused and to make things right. Does your mom visit you in juvy? If not, can you let her know how much it would mean to you if she would? Maybe your coming independence confuses her, even frightens her. What was she addicted to? How does any trouble you've been in, your being in juvy, affect her? You sound like you include her in your life, so that's a good start on your part. We hope things get better between you both.

My Life

it feels like i'm seeing my life from the outside
 locked in this concrete cage where many personalities
 collide
 locked behind this door contemplating my future and
 how to survive
 stuck between family and friends I have to decide
 my family's love and loyalty is what kept me alive
 our people stuck in oakland swimming in or own
 genocide
 ignorance pumped into our brains telling us to shoot
 or die
 not understanding we can be something, the limit's
 the sky
 intelligent minds hiding behind a two hour high
 people always told me i had potential
 but i just didn't know how to spread my wings and fly
 now i wish i would have believed instead or thinking
 they were lies
 now i realize that i know how to read and write
 and that i have an intelligent mind that has brilliant
 insight
 and it seems our people have mistaken stupidity for
 bravery
 shootin' and fightin' has put us in another state of
 slavery
 there is no such thing as democracy
 it's just a smart way to lead us into poverty
 you see right now we're living in hell
 growin' up on those streets destined for jail
 no love for our sisters or brothers
 stayin' out all night disrespecting our mothers
 putting our trust in others
 searching for love in all the wrong places
 played into the game by smilin' faces
 our race degraded by political racists
 our youngstas tied into this street life like tight shoe
 laces
 age twelve, already in metal bracelets
 i've spent most my teenage life in and out of
 placements
 if only i would have listened
 but i refuse to live the rest of my life imprisoned
 yes — it seems depressing
 but as of right now that's my life i'm living

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your circumstances are depressing, and your present situation has you stressing, but your intellectual capacity and insightful veracity displayed each week in the pages of The Beat, testify to the potential of which you speak. Yeah, you can read and write, and your words are more powerful than physical fight 'cause they raise you and your reader too with the might of your spirit. You've targeted street bravery as a broad road to modern slavery, creating a new laboring class released from their cages to work for slave wages and call it state beneficence. You are right to refuse to buy into this, even with all the gaudy baubles of the game luring you to trade your freedom for a moment of fame — you'd have to be insane to choose to remain in this life of pain, whatever the short-term gain. But we're preaching to the choir, 'cause the song you sing takes consciousness higher than gangster rap. It's only a matter of time before you define your goals clearly — and accomplish that!

shootin' and fightin' has put us in another

state of slavery

there is no such thing as democracy

it's just a smart way to lead us into poverty

These Guns

These twisted metals that men have made
 Bring murder to our streets
 After the makers have been paid
 They blame our hip hop beats
 These people make pieces of death
 With much legal cover
 As our parents hold their breath
 And watch their young youth kill each other
 Some die when they once danced with dreams, and great
 futures lie ahead
 Some live as they kill us and laugh when we are dead
 When the men on top see weaknesses
 They still push us further but fail to see how bleak it is

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are more than a poet, you could be an economist, because you see just how capitalism works. Money takes no responsibility for the outcomes of what it pushes. Only you can save yourself from these guns, because the people who make guns and the music companies that bought hip hop are going to sell it back to you without caring whether you live, love or die. Be safe!

These twisted metals that men have made
 Bring murder to our streets
 After the makers have been paid
 They blame our hip hop beats

Street Life

It's hell in these streets
 Wives and mothers getting beat
 Havin' wars wit' the cops
 Young homeboys getting shot
 I wonder when it's gonna stop
 This shhh they gotta drop
 Young kids lying dead
 Two bullets to they head
 For some shhh he probably said
 But it ain't the end
 Gang-related shootings
 Homeboys getting HIV from booty
 Hookers on the block
 Young homeboys selling rocks
 Crooked cops
 Selling glocks
 Twelve- year- old girls having babies
 Blaming they step-dad
 Saying, "He raped me"
 Prisoners going crazy
 Wanting to be free
 Getting sentenced
 From the age of sixteen
 All the way to forty-three
 Also, homeless people on the streets
 Getting buried six feet deep
 Because they didn't have money
 To get a bight to eat
 Or a place to sleep
 Because everyone wants to play for keeps
 Too many OGs selling drugs
 To little kids, wit' OGs' mean thugs
 On they scrappers with dubs
 Sippin' on some rum

-Lil' Chuch, Marin

From The Beat: Amazing poem. You describe essence of the violence, the tragedy, the destruction of the streets so vividly. Where are you in this scenario? What have the streets done to or for you? Do you have any solutions for the virulence in the streets? If so, we hope you'll write it into your next brilliant poem.

Good Day, Bad Place

What's up Beat? It's Little Mike, chillin' here at Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall. I know this sounds wrong, but today was a good day for me in here because I got to meet Stanley "Tookie" Williams' wife and son. They came in and talked to us about redemption, and their feelings about having their loved one executed. It made me realize how bad I need to change my life, and how grateful I should be that I'm not in a worse situation. It was a really good day.

So - everybody locked up - turn it around - while you can.

RIP Stanley "Tookie" Williams.

-Little Mike, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're very happy that you were able to meet those folks and even happier that you "got" what they had to say. Good Listening Little Mike. Don't forget this experience. When things get rough, remember Mrs. Williams and her son.

today was a good day for me in here because I got to meet Stanley "Tookie" Williams' wife and son.

Pain Will Find You

Even though you can't see it
It is always there
Pain is not rare
Shhh, it's everywhere
In the smallest cracks
Of that wide-opened grin
You must've forgot
God knows what's within
In the mornings
Even the afternoons
If it ain't there yet
It'll be there soon
Everyone try running from pain
But that's insane
Ain't no escaping emotion
Whether physically or mentally
If you ain't prepared
Well, you better be
You can't escape pain
Through purple and pills
If that's what you think
You're going head over hills
I know from experience
So listen to what I teach
I ain't tryna preach
Just teaching you a lesson
If you're happy right now
Consider that a blessin'!

-Karea, Marin

From The Beat: You're so right. No matter how you try to insulate yourself from pain-legal drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, illegal drugs, withdrawing from life- life itself is always going to hurt you. Because life is basically tragic, because we all die sometime, pain infuses us all, all throughout life. So, just as you write, any pleasure or fun you derive from life, go for it! Luckily, life can also be enormously thrilling, rewarding, miraculous and fun. We hope, now that you're out, life will be wonderful for you!

A Letter To My Grandchild

If I had a grandchild, well I would start my letter off like this. Dearest ever grandbabies: Well, this is hard to write about, but I'm gonna start by telling y'all that I love you and that I'm really happy with my son and daughter for giving this OG some grandchildren!

I want to let you rascals know that I really care for you. In my younger days, I would've never expected to be writing a letter to my loved ones like this. I hope that you will listen to your parents and give them the love they deserve. When I was young I never paid attention to my folks. I thought I was bad-ass, never listened to my parents, and by doing that, it took me to nowhere except a jail cell behind four walls - away from my folks!

I'm telling you this 'cause I don't want to see you in the same circumstances that your OG was going through. Life is too precious to waste in a damn cell, locked up like an animal. Enjoy your life and live happy - and remember that your OG grandpa loves you always. Well, alratos. Always the vato.

-Giggles, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, we think you'd make a great grandfather, but now we want to see you stay alive and free so you can get to be one in real life. And that's some good advice you're giving, but you know they're going to look at how you're living - not how you used to live, but the way you live before their young eyes. We know you'll be wise when you're older, but why wait. Wise up, 'cause you've got no more time to waste.

Why?

Why this race?
Why his face?
Why these arms?
Why this waist?
Why this brain?
Why not plain?
These thoughts have driven me insane
Why confrontation?
Why segregation?
Thought it is over
I still takes place
In my world
Fly girl
Why not soar through the sky, girl?
Why people die?
Why people lie?
Why sell yourself
Just to get high?
Why God still care?
Why life ain't fair?
These questions burn deep inside
No real solution
Just wondering, "Why?"

-Re-Re, Marin

From The Beat: You ask terrific questions that have puzzle philosophers since the beginning of time. When you look at your arms, face, the color of your skin, what do you see? What does what you look like mean to you? When you think about the reasons for death, deception, drugs, God, pain, do you find any justification for them that makes sense to you? If so, or if not, why don't you let The Beat know in another terrific poem!

I hope that you will listen to your parents and give them the love they deserve.
When I was young I never paid attention to my folks.

Poem For My Contract (My Childhood)

When he got drunk
 He would pass out or do hurtful things
 Unlike a father
 He wouldn't care where I was
 Or what I was doing
 When she met a guy
 She would take off and leave me somewhere
 Unlike a mother putting me in someone else's care
 She met him
 His name was John
 He was a truck driver
 Gone for most of my life
 He was the dad I always wanted
 He cared and loved me,
 But when he would take off
 It was hard for me to say good-bye
 He promised me that their relationship would last,
 But when it came down to the seriousness
 It collapsed
 I felt alone
 Abandoned
 Mom would leave me for another guy
 So I sat
 Wishing it never happened.

-Kalifornia, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a very sad poem, but beautifully constructed. It gives us a brief look into your childhood — but one that gives us a good sense of the pain you felt growing up, and the absence of a sustained parental involvement in your life. These are difficult things to overcome, but you are blessed with some special gifts of understanding and self-expression, so we have high hopes that you will be one of those who can move beyond her past and build a bright and productive future. Thank you for sharing this story with us.

... one day I can go to prison, be dead somewhere.
 I don't want to be like that and I know my mom or
 my family wouldn't want that.

Dear Life, Get It Together!

Dear Life:

I need to get my life together because I don't want to keep living like this — going to jail, get shot at running from the police. That's not the way I want to live anymore because one day I can go to prison, be dead somewhere. I don't want to be like that and I know my mom or my family wouldn't want that. So that's why when I get out of jail I'm going to change my life around, go back to school and try to get a job, a good job so I can start a family and support them the best way I can. I can't do that if I'm going to jail or if shot I can't do that.

Being in jail makes me think a lot about my life, my future, things like that. That's why I pray every night so God can help turn my life around and for Him to forgive me for all my sins before it be too late, and that is my dear life.

-Dre Drilla B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The desire to make a change is the first step on a long journey — but a journey that will make your life so much better for you and for your family. We admire so much in this heartfelt piece, DD. We don't know what makes a young person like you open his eyes and realize that God's gift of life is the most precious of all (with freedom a very close second), but whatever is responsible, we are grateful because we see far too many strong, intelligent, good-looking young people throwing it all away for so very little! Asking for forgiveness is also the beginning of a new outlook, but it's only a beginning. To complete the journey, you have to honor your own promises to God and stop doing the things that have led you to jail, and start doing the things that you know will allow you to live freely (school, a job, a family). Good luck!

Fulfilling God's Word

If people all across the world didn't have to worry about money there would be no hate, no violence, no murders. Money is the devil, period. If there was no money, then a lot more people would be fulfilling the word of God. It would be more sharing, loving, and caring. there would be no more hunger. There would also be no more stealing or killing. It would be more giving. It would also be no more homeless.

It would be a world
 of peace
 and harmony
 No judgment day
 No hell
 No angles
 No Heaven
 But a special place
 Among God and loved ones
 World-wide
 Living in peace and harmony

-Young Boog B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like the feelings you share in this piece. Are you fulfilling the word of God? If not, is it the lack of money in your life that leads you to do things that are not part of His plan? Do you plan to adjust your life in some way when you touch down so that you can come closer to leading the life you know that you're supposed to be leading? How are you going to do it?

Treat 'Em Right

W'at's up Beat? Today I'm gonna talk how these ninjas get outta line with they females. All right, these ninjas use they females every way possible way they can. For example, when they use them for money that ain't coo'. I think its messed up. These ninjas ask they girl to buy them everything in the world. That ain't your girl's responsibility. That's your responsibility.

Second of all, they use girls for sex. I have never used any girl for just sex. It's just wrong to hurt yo' girls feelings and she starts crying. So ninjas, will you ever step up to the plate and treat at least one girl right, or are you gonna play games your whole life? If you're gonna play games, you will never find a wife or ever be happy, and that's real talk, ninjas.

To the beautiful young ladies reading this, if you ever find a man and he treats you like shhh, leave his ass and come to me. I'll treat you like a real woman. I love treating you women good but they all cheat on me or treat me like shhhh. I need a real woman. So basically ladies, keep yo' head up and keep looking... You'll find that special one. I'm out Beat Late.

-Billy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You give excellent advice, Billy. We wish every boy, in or out of the halls, would think of women the way you do because it shows that you respect yourself, and therefore you respect your women. You also give good advice to young women not to put up with men who mistreat them. Finally, take a slice of your own advice: "Keep yo' head up and keep looking... You'll find that special one."

So ninjas, will you ever step up
 to the plate and treat at least one
 girl right, or are you gonna play
 games your whole life?

Why?

why must my life
be so filled with anger and heartbreak
when i'm the one that's doing the breaking
why must i hurt the people i love most
why does love hurt so much
when you're locked up
listen to songs and remember
all the good times that you had with that person
why do i act like that with her
i know she loves me for me
and i know she's not going to leave me
lost in darkness alone
i wish i could've told her i loved her
before i went into court that day
i miss her so much
maybe one day i'll see her again
and she'll still be by my side holdin' me down

-Koolaid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The worst thing you did was live a life that guaranteed that sooner or later you'd end up incarcerated. Look into yourself, deeper than the single thing that brought you in, and change what's needs to be changed so you can stay free. Then when you see her again, you won't repeat this separation that hurts so much.

Two In One Week

What it is? Man, San Francisco is really crazy. Somebody get knocked off every day. What I'm trying to say, is, people think being in YGC is bad. Don't get me wrong, I would like to be home. But at the same time, it's sort of a blessing to be locked.

It's not like I'm hiding in the hall from the streets, but if I was on the streets, a lot of shhh could've went down. I could've got took down for a gun, dope, etc.

Thank God I'm in here. When I get out... Beast mode.

-Lil' Stacks B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are a mysterious mixture of insight and knowledge (the kind that lets you realize the hall might be a sanctuary for you, at least temporarily), and frustrating childish irresponsibility (the kind that lets you promise: "When I get out... Beast mode.") You've written often about how being locked up may be the only thing keeping you alive, which is sad and scary. But you're intelligent, so you know your life depends on finding a way to stay healthy in freedom and not in slavery. You know there's a whole 'nother world out there, outside of your neighborhood. You are naturally most comfortable with what you know, so we're asking you to think about, at least, something that is harder, and therefore requires more strength of character, and that is to leave behind what you know (which includes both a geographic change and a change of attitude), and redefine your life. Hard? Yes, but worth it? Absolutely!

Love Is

For some people that love is tucking you in and kissing you
"goodnight"

No matter how young or old you are

Some people don't remember that love is listening and
laughing and asking questions

No matter what your age

Few recognize that love is commitment, responsibility, no fun
at all

Unless love is you and me

-Lil' Kayla GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We've seen a lot of pieces about love over the years in The Beat, but this is one of the best. We love the memory of our mother tucking us in and kissing us goodnight. Yes, that's love!

A House Ain't Home

a house ain't a home
just think of being alone
my family is gone
the system raised me till i was grown
mistakes raise the children today
why can't i live life in heaven far away
i don't know where i could build in
just livin' and it's comin' to an endin'
i can't remember the day i was born
i wonder if i will remember the day i die
life explains itself again and again
death is adorned with ornaments of life
living is within the dreamer's eye
a house ain't no home
it seems like the people who do
the right thing the world think wrong
together they won't never come to be
families will continue to cry everafterly
tears drop from your eyes with no splash
alone you'll stand with questions you want to ask
ask questions 'cause a question ain't wrong
you could live in the woods and experience more
being locked in is living in a state of war
beside mountains where clouds live
maybe there the skies give peace
upon the beasts
let 'em nest
in dreams we could walk the rest
a house ain't home
people go through things with others
i'm sure we want to be alone
yet we need friends, a lover
someone who lifts everything
leaving nothing behind
pain has no problems
as if the blind couldn't lead the blind
if we don't search how can we find
it all makes sense when
a home ain't a house
my heartbeats make music
so that my life enjoys the sound
but a house ain't home
rather you live there with others alone
what we get used to
gets taken away
so what is there in the world that will stay

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a strange meditative journey into the interior regions of understanding being with others and being alone, and how, for some for sure and maybe for all, time reveals after you fall that you were alone with all those others around because a family is more than a house and a home is something that stays in your heart even when it goes away in your life. Whatever else goes wrong, that's what we most need to have go right. So we get used to falling, and when it passes like a cloud, to love we're calling out loud — take me home or leave me alone.

why must my life
be so filled with anger
and heartbreak
when i'm the one that's
doing the breaking

Oh, Life

I ain't got nothing to say about my life, 'cause I've lived a life of crime since I started learning how to read and write. Now I've hit the end of the road and just got sentenced to CYA — and now I'm speechless! I never thought the judge would ever say those harsh words to me.

As for my life, all I could say is, "Fuhgit my life!" Like the DA said about me, I'm a menace to society. I'm a danger to everyone around me as well as myself. I'm nothing but a gang banger who doesn't care about life in general. At the age of seventeen, I've already become a career criminal, and I belong in a cage, so I don't end up hurting an innocent citizen again.

As I lay down, it really just hit me, I have really become someone I never thought I would be. I have lost many people on the way and hurt my mom too many times. Having said that — dear life, I hope and pray that I change.

-Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have already changed, just to be saying what you're saying in the way you're saying it. You're a hardhead, and some people are more hardheaded than others, but it sounds like it just got through to you, what you've been doing, how you've been living, and the price you're paying as well as the price those who love you have to pay, not to mention the innocent citizens you've been preying on — someone else's mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin. You taught yourself to see your gang as your family, and there is a lot of love there, but a lot that isn't love, not to mention the fakes or even the hardheads (like you?) who will lead others straight into destruction 'cause that's all they know to do, all they want to do, even if (again like you) they refuse to admit to themselves the reality of what comes next. Don't let YA harden you as a banger, 'cause there will be plenty of pressure on you to prove you're "real" — so you can join the bangers on the yard in the pen' who are down for life without appeal. It is not worth it. Now that you know, hold onto that knowledge at all costs, or it will be your loss.

Breathe

I'm not afraid of anything
I just need to know that I can breathe
And I don't need much of anything
But suddenly
I am small and the world is big
All around me is fast moving
Surrounded by so many things
And suddenly
How does it feel to be
Different from me
Are we the same
How does it feel
I am young
But I'm not free
And I get tired
And I get weak
I get lost and I can't speak
How does it feel to be?
Different from me?
Are we the same?
How does it feel
I'm not afraid of anything
I just need to know that I can breathe

-Noah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The ironic thing about this extraordinary poem, is that even though you're writing about an intense loneliness, any one who reads it will recognize him or herself in it, because you do such a masterful job of describing that loneliness. You say "I can't speak" but in this poem, you find your voice and it rings loud and strong.

Thinking

I've been locked up now for six days. My heart is full of pain, I violated my probation officer by cutting school. That's a stupid reason to get locked up.

The reason why I cut school was because my little nine month old baby brother was very sick. Now being inside has me worried, not being able to see him or ask my momma how my lil' bra is doing.

I'm only 16 years old I've been through so much that I even regret something that happened in the past, being between these four white walls has me thinking where would I be in ten years, who would I be?

I was thinking so hard I thought about, if I go to school graduate. I'll have money. Money for cars, houses, even money to have more girls on me.

It's cool if you wanna chill in the block, smoke weed, drink, have them groupies over, do your thang. It's cool but that don't get you nowhere in life but in jail or in camp. You don't just hurt yourself you also hurt your loved ones. Most people don't think about their actions until they get locked up, I just wanna get released, sit on my couch and watch my family get old!

-Taz Maniac, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a sad story, that you cut school to do the right thing for your baby brother and you pay a price like this. There must be something more to the tale? Well, the system sometimes feels like a set up for us to fail, and it doesn't see the person you are and the life you need to live. We hope you see what a great brother you are, and don't take this little detour to heart. Keep on being a good man, and you will get out of it.

I just wanna get released, sit on my
couch and watch my family get old!

My Uncle's Jersey

The saddest thing I own is my uncle's Jersey. He bought it for me a long time ago, before he was murdered and taken from me. Another sad thing I own are the memories I have of him. I enjoy to think about him but I became so deep in my thoughts that sometimes I forget he's gone and I expect him to come home or to come visit me in Juvy, but he's not.

Every May seventh I put on that Jersey because that's the day he died, and I want to pay my respects the best way I can, but it gets to me when I see somebody with the same Jersey on or the same car or even the same shoes.

The saddest thing I own is my family — I don't really own them but they're pretty sad from what happened to my uncle. They stopped going to work some days they started to drink heavy, almost every day, mope around high because he's gone and they couldn't do a thing to stop it.

It was three years ago, but my memories are still fresh as if it happened yesterday when he was taking me to one of my football games which he never missed or taking me shopping before school started it all seems so close but yet it's so far away.

Last but not least the saddest thing I own is myself because I can't get over it.

-D-boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for this incredibly powerful and well-written piece. We're sorry to hear not only about his loss, but the way that loss has hurt your family. Is that part of what got you started down the road to trouble? Do you still play football? Are there other people that you can turn too? What was your uncle like? It sounds like he loved you deeply... that means that no matter what, his love is with you still, inside you. You know that, right?

I Unite

I might get drunk, I might get high.
 I might get thizzed, I might get angry.
 I might be sad, I might be hot.
 I might be stupid, I might be smart.
 I might be that one, I might be the negative
 I might be rough, I might be soft
 I might be weak, I might be strong
 I might just go to this group home and run.
 I might be careful and still pack.
 I might do my program
 I might be cool, I might be shady
 But I am who I am and I got the Lord on my side.

-Kip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Strong poem again, it moves with your moods to show all your sides, like water flowing down a staircase... but don't you think it's impossible to try to ride two horses at the same time? Isn't that a good way to fall on your head and crack your skull.

Meth

Methamphetamine
 Got the best of me
 I was a dope fiend
 I was weak I had to have it
 Those big clouds
 I never put the pipe down
 I went for rounds and rounds
 Pounds after pounds
 Meth got the best of me
 Now my mind is clear and I can see
 That Meth it just ain't for me
 So what it is what I be
 My name is Nicky
 And Methamphetamine got the best of me

-Lil' Nicky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Will your mind stay clear and focused when you get out and are faced with the drug again? We truly hope so, and believe in you. Good luck staying clean.

They always wanted me to have a work
 permit. How was I gonna get one
 without going to school.

Twist Wit' It

I see where I'm from and I see what I do.
 It happens to be a self-esteem problem messing wit' me.
 I see the community and I see my hood as we raise our name up all the hittas come down.
 We strong, mental, and physical but sometimes we don't think. I believe that I'm true and lightweight humble, but the truth is that I got a evil twist wit' it I'm misunderstood, maybe I get judged.
 But the truth its where I come from. I'm young maybe even lightweight naïve.
 But don't get me wrong. Sometimes, I don't even know me.

-Kip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every single individual line in this poem is packed with meaning, and touches on the confusion of growing up in a twisted community. It's like you've got two sides, one that sees what's happening, one that's caught up in it, and one side that knows his own worth, one side that, like you said "don't think." And yes, it's where you're from, both the ugly and the beautiful. Which side do you think you are going to choose?

Dear Life

We've been through a lot over the last past sixteen years.
 There were good times, but mostly bad.
 There were happy times, but mostly sad.
 Over the years, I've recovered from pain
 There were times people thought you're insane
 You've set the goals and shot for them, too
 At a short pit stop, you didn't know what to do
 A couple of people tried to bring you down
 But when worse came to worse, your smile was never down
 About now, you're happy, because your mood is high as a kite
 At the tail of the string, you've held on for dear life!

-Re-Re, Marin

From The Beat: Re-Re, this is a tender, wise, sympathetic poem for someone, or is a poem about you and your life? What is your plan for the next chapter of your life?



When It's Cool Outside

I remember when I was about fourteen years my momma had got tired of my bad attitude so she put me out. I had nowhere to go so I just went from friend's house to friend's house.

After I got tired of that I went and got a job at McDonalds. That was my first job. After that it was hard trying to take care of myself. I had to buy everything for myself and it was hard being young with no high school education trying to get a good job. They always wanted me to have a work permit. How was I gonna get one without going to school.

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel for you. It's hard taking care of yourself no matter how old you are—when you're so young you're just not prepared for all of the hardship...we hope when you get out things get easier.

A Letter To My Unborn Child

To My Unborn Child,

The day I meet you, I will hold you forever, keep you in my heart every day and every night. Even after death, you'll be in my heart.

I don't know when we'll meet. It could be next year or in ten years, but I'll tell you something: I will keep that moment with me. I wanna do right by you and hope you don't hate me because I love you and wanna teach you good things.

If I'm not there because something happened to me, don't be worried or scared 'cause I love you and will always be there whether you know it or not. I'll watch over you because I care, so cheer up. I'll always be there.

-Brittany, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: What a very sweet and touching letter. Just keep moving forward and making positive steps, Brittany, and you will be preparing yourself to be the best mother ever. Don't hurry it, but when it comes, be ready! Thank you for this.

Antes De Venir Aqui

Antes de venir a este lugar yo era una persona feliz porque vivía sin ningún problema. Cuando me trajeron aquí mi vida cambio y tristeza vino a mi vida y todo por lo que otra persona había hecho, y yo quisiera saber lo que había pasado. Esto va a dejar una cicatriz que nunca se va a borrar de mi corazón. Estoy pagando los errores de otras personas y esto no es nada alegre ni chistoso.

Cuando yo estaba afuera, yo nunca me imagine estar en un lugar como este, porque sabías las cosas que hago. Yo nunca en mi vida pude hacer algo de lo que me estan acusando porque ese no fue el ejemplo que mi familia no la iglesia me ha dada.

Yo sufro porque estoy pagando por algo que no hice y por eso mi familia está sufriendo al igual que yo.

From The Beat: Estas son las cosas que pasan cuando se juntan con personas que no deben de juntarse. Esperamos que esta experiencia te sirva a darte cuenta que en esos lugares no solo pelagra tu libertad sino toda tu vida. Imaginate que te hubieran agarrado por algo peor, que te hayan involucrado en un crimen que no hayas cometido, y que tu sentencia fuera hacer vida en cárcel. ¿Cómo te sentirías si algo así hubiera ocurrido? A veces las cosas pasan por algo. ¿Cual crees tú que fue la razón? ¿Crees que haya alguna forma como tú puedas obtener tu vida otra vez?

Before Coming Here

Before coming here, I was a happy person because I used to live without problems. When they brought me here, my life changed and sadness came to my life and all for things other people did, and I didn't know of. This will leave a scar that will never be erased from my heart. I'm paying off mistakes other people did and this is not even happy nor funny.

When I was out, I never imagined myself being in a place like this one because I know what I'm doing. I'd have never in my life done something like what they are accusing me because those are not examples my parents or the church has applied to me.

I'm suffering because I'm paying for something I didn't do and that's why my parents are suffering as well.

-Nestor B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: These are the things that happen when you hang out with people you're not supposed to hang with. We hope this experience helps you realize that those places don't just put your freedom at risk but your life as well. Imagine if they had gotten you for something worse, even a crime you didn't commit; as result, you might have to face the rest of your life in jail. How would you feel if that had happened? Sometimes things happen for a reason. What do you think the reason was? Is there a way you can get back the life you had before?

Mi Vida Ha Sido Un Desmadre

Mi vida ha sido un desatre. No soy pandillero pero si soy vago. Anduve vendiendo droga, robando carros en Atlanta, GA. Me ajunte con un primo y el me dijo que fuéramos a robar y yo le pregunte que íbamos a robar y me dijo que esterios y carros. Por eso aprendí a robar. Despues hasta yo solo me iba a robar.

Luego quería cambiar mi vida porque no quería seguir en lo mismo porque ya estaba cansado de hacer lo mismo.

Luego me vine para Oakland, y me encuentre con otro primo y me dijo que vendieramos droga y le dije que si. Me puse a vender y despues me arrestaron en San Francisco y caí en la juvenil.

Les envio este mensaje a todos los que estan metido en estas cosas: Espero que se retiren antes que caigan en la cárcel porque cuando uno está aquí uno se arrepiente.

From The Beat: Parece que has escogido los peores influencia en los últimos momentos de tus vidas. Lo bueno es que podemos ver que te sientes arrepentido por lo que ha pasado y que has buscado la forma como mandar el mensajes aquellos quienes estan comenzando. Esperamos muy fuertemente que ellos cacten este mensaje. No saben cuantos problemas se pueden evitar si hacen caso a tus intrucciones, Oscar. Esepramos que despues de esta experiencia tu vida cambie para bien.

My Life Has Been Crazy

My life has been a disaster. I am not a gangster, but I am a hoodlum. I was going around selling drugs and stealing cars in Atlanta, GA. I hooked up with a cousin and he told me that we should go pull a lick and I asked him what were we going to go steal and he told me stereos and cars. That's why I learned how to rob. Pretty soon, I was going out and stealing things on my own.

Later on, I wanted to change my life because I didn't want to continue doing the same thing because I was tired of doing the same thing. Then, I came to Oakland and I hooked up with a different cousin and he told me we should sell drugs and I told him yes. I started to sell and then I got arrested in San Francisco and I ended up in Juvenile Hall.

I'm sending this message to all those who are involved in these things: I hope y'all retire from doing these things before y'all land in jail because when you are in here, one regrets everything one did.

-Oscar B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It appears to us that you have chosen the worst influences during the last couple of moments in your life. The good thing is that we can see that feel remorseful for everything that has happened and that you have been searching a way to send this message to those who are starting in this lifestyle. We strongly hope that they catch this message. They have no idea how many problems can be avoided if they listen to your instructions, Oscar. We hope that after this experience, your life changes for the better.

A Letter To Life

Dear Life,

You are something I no longer have and you're what I'm missin' the most. Having breakfast in the morning with my family, eating French toast. You're the thing that's keeping me alive, but at the same time I feel dead. I'm fed up with you and the way you run things. Yeah, I heard that you ain't easy and everyone has to go through with you, but sometimes I'll mess up because I gotta do what I gotta do.

You make me sick to my stomach sometimes, and hella happy at others, and at the same time you're the reason why I found my lover. You made me experience a lot of things and gave me punishment along the way. You did some screwed up things that was just hella dumb. You're not so great when I have to spend you here in YGC, because this is a place that I really don't wanna be.

-Mary GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a great letter, Mary. If you were going to write a letter about what you want out of life, what would you write? How much of what Life has given you are you responsible for, and how much is out of your control? What can you do to change the things about your life (like coming here) that you don't like?

Dear Life

I know I messed up. I did things that I wasn't supposed to do, some stupid things like smoking and missing my court date, knowing that my pee was going to be dirty, and that my PO was going to test me. It's a trip, though, because my PO real cool. He tested me a few times and my pee was dirty, but he never sent me up here and said I violated my probation. He just kept telling me to bring my numbers down on the test.

I kept telling him that I was going to bring my numbers down, stop smoking, but I never did. I guess, now I know I'm in here for a reason. If I wasn't in here, I'd probably be dead or still smoking on my way up here anyway. So right now, to tell myself the truth, I'm really not ready to get out because I need to figure out what I'm trying to do. So right now I just gotta keep my head up and keep on maintaining my composure.

-Tabari B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your PO has given you so many chances, and it sounds like you didn't appreciate them. Your PO is trying to work with you to bring about change, so are you ready to change? Or are you going to do the same thing again? Wake up and open your eyes, Tabari, and cherish those that are around you who want you to do better. When you say that you're not ready to get out, you're telling us more than you know — and that is that you are beginning to look at the world through adult eyes, and that makes you more ready to get out than you know. Just keep those eyes open!

Good Times

What it do Beat? This Cartoon from San Francisco droppin' a few lineas about this one time on the outs. Me and da homies was chillin' in our barrio when the homie's girl told us about a party. So we was like, "Hell! Let's go."

So we rounded up the homies and went six cars deep. Before we went, we went to the gas station. We at the gas station when some fool and his homie wants funk, so we like, "Whatever," and got to throwin'. Next thing you know, we hear the 5-0 comin' so we hop in the car and skeet-skirt shaks the stop, yad-I-mean!

We off to the party hyphy as hell. So when we get there, was hella different sets, but it was all good. Dey showed respect. We was thizzin', smokin' bomb, pervin' off the Henny, messin' wit females.

After the party was over, we went back to the barrio and pulled an all-nighter. Good times. Well, my time is up. Gotta go back to the box. One love. Alratos.

-Cartoon B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We appreciate this piece Cartoon mostly because it's not filled with self-congratulations for your own set. In fact, besides the nice descriptions of your party, we were most interested to read that "hella different sets" can all play together without funk, and that rivals can respect each other and show self-discipline. We seldom get to read pieces like this where everyone just has a good time and goes home. Of course, we're not encouraging the "thizzin', smokin' bomb, (and) pervin' off da Henny," but all that's small potatoes compared to an evening without beef among people who are used to beefing. Thanks for showing us another side of the coin...

When I Get Mad

When I am mad, I will laugh, because I don't like to fight. So I just walk away from bad things.

When somebody makes me really mad, I will go off. No lie, I will take all of my anger out on that person that makes me mad — but to tell you the truth, I just don't let them get to my level. They get madder and madder when I just walk away! But I trust nobody. That is why.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd give you a hundred per cent endorsement and universal applause, if it wasn't for that part where you say that you'd still go off on someone for making you mad if you felt its sting too bad. Still, we feel your message and applaud your message of wisdom, courage and self-restraint — and we encourage you to continue to maintain!

Wrong Choices

Que onda, Beat? Well, primeramente saludos a todos los homies en la torcida... Bueno...

Today I'ma write about my wrong choices in life. April 3rd 2006, it was a simple choice of pullin' over or driving off that got me here. I decided to drive off. I started in the Mission when the narcs tried to pull me over. I watched them hit a U-turn and get behind me turning on their sirens instantly. I was with two so-called homies, and decided to hit the gas pedal.

I was driving and getting away until SFPD came deep on me. I ended up getting on the freeway and I remember lookin' in the rearview and I had about 30 cop cars on my tail, one after another. Well, half way through the Bay Bridge the CHP stopped the traffic. So I got off on Treasure Island. That's when it all went bad.

At the bottom of the island, the first cop rammed my car on the passenger side and radioed that I hit him, which led to three cops packing three guns to shoot me up six times and the guy on the passenger side three times. I kept driving and was going about 10 mph when another cop car crashed into me head on. The air bags popped out and my car hit two doughnuts ending up on the other side of the street. I was bleeding like crazy and still wanted to run, but my door was stuck, and when I saw cops aiming at me I played dead. Cops beat my ass and the next day I came here.

Well, all I wanna say is don't make a little problem big because look what and where it got me. Locked up facing years with six bullets in me. Much love to the those doing tiempo en la torcida. Keep trucha, y al rato.

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're not giving you props for putting all our lives in danger by engaging in a high-speed freeway chase with the cops, but we are giving you props for telling your story so well. Reading this makes us sweat and our hearts beat faster. You just couldn't have been thinking with all your brain to think you could escape a police convoy on the Bay Bridge (where we drive every day)! At the same time, what the cops did is thoroughly and totally unacceptable and wrong! Of course, they're "wrong" doesn't make yours right... You are so lucky to be alive that we hope it makes you see the world in a different way. With six bullets in you — and their scars a permanent reminder of this insanity — do you think God had some purpose in mind for sparing your life? What changes do you imagine in your life when you are again able to exercise your own free will?

Dear Life

I just want you to know that I have not really been enjoying it all the time. I go through a lot and sometimes I need help and don't know how to ask. So I talk to God and hope that He leads me the right way.

I have a family that cares a lot about me and my grandmother loves me more then anybody else in this world. I have a girlfriend that loves me and I love her too. She's mad that I'm in here because she know I'm better then this.

I'm in the streets. I live the street life of a youngsta in the streets. Being in the streets is hard too 'cause you always got to watch your back. That's why I started spending more time with my girl.

But now I'm in B5 hoping to get out and get back to my family and girl 'cause I don't feel like going to the Ranch or CYA 'cause that's what I'm looking at. But like Tupac say, "Gotta keep your head up," like I say, and hope for the best. One love.

-C-B B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have so much going for you, C-B — a loving family, a devoted grandmother, a girlfriend that loves you, and a faith in God. Why risk all of that by playing by the rules of the street which you had nothing to do with making, but only inherited from others? What do you think your girl means when she says you're better than that? What makes you better than that? With so much support, you can make the changes that you know you have to make if you want to stay out of the system and with the people that love you. They have cried tears for you and made sacrifices for you. It's time to return the favor.

Living At 375 Woodside Avenue

Living at 375 Woodside Ave. is very difficult. There are all types of rules you have to abide by. No.1, eating horrible non-seasoned food. The cold thing is after a time period you get to being used to the food. You will catch yo'self going up for seconds, and if there ain't seconds who would be wishing there were

No. 2, you have to wear these dingy-ass under clothes, no type of bleach done touched them. Another cold thing is you are on a supervised five minutes maybe even four and a half minute shower.

Another complicated situation is that you have to learn how to get along with the staff and stay on they good side. They also can be difficult. It's like they bring home issues to work, which isn't good. Basically you just have to get with the gestures around here.

Last but not least... females. You have to learn how to get along with the females. It's hard and it takes time to maintain with the bull. You have to let them know you ain't no punk, and you also have to keep the drama low-key. The best way is to just get along and leave all bullshhh behind and think about you and your case.

Basically that what goes with living at 375 Woodside Ave.

-Carter GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have some good advice in here for your fellow inmates. Of course, you can avoid all the hall drama by staying out of the hall to begin with. You've done a good job of describing what life is like here for a girl, but of course, this place is not designed for your comfort...

A Letter To My Grandchild

To my grandson, To my granddaughter: This your grandpa speaking. I just hope you get this letter to help you in the future. Don't never get distracted by money or the things people wear, because you wanna be a leader and a person who's really somebody one day in life.

Just know that money, drugs, being cool — these things will never help you in life. And know that your family is the strongest relationship you will ever have. Be your own person and do the right things — you will make very many people very much proud.

Sincerely, Gramps Alan.

-Alan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're giving some good advice from a life of experience. So, if this is true — why do you do what you do? Or are you really through with all those distractions from what's really important in life? Set an example now.

From Your Grandmother

Dear child of the grand of my life,
You are special, a part of me, shine like in spring bloom

Like a flower and never fall into Satan's game.
He blinds us and gives us answers to blame.

Sweetheart, don't fall apart,
You remain in my heart.

Be yourself, no one else.
Know right from wrong, mind free,
Live in the country of liberty.

My grandchild
My love for you will last a while.

-Lil' Payasa GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a wonderful letter. We wonder if you ever received such a loving letter from your grandma, or whether it would have made a difference in your life if you did. When you tell your grandchild, "be yourself, no one else," what do you mean?

Dear Granddaughter

This is your grandmother Linda. I am just writing you this letter to tell you that the world is a hard place to stay in. During your childhood a lot of people are going to try to take advantage of you. But if you move on and don't listen to none of those people you will make it.

Try to go the right way, by going to school and getting your diploma. I am telling you this because while I was growing up I went the wrong way. I started selling drugs. I even stopped thinking about my future. Because I knew that my goals were not going to be accomplished, I started coaching my little basketball team high. And I didn't even go to visit my sisters. So do good in your future, and remember your Grandma Linda loves you.

-Lil' One GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Are you thinking about your future now, Lil' One? You may have believed you'd never accomplish your goals, but why give up before you make the attempt? What are your goals now? What are your plans for achieving them. If you had received a letter like this from your grandmother, or someone like her, would it have made a difference in your life?

Life Is A Struggle... The Streets Is Trouble

Life is a struggle

The streets is a trouble

Money making is my thing

But beef is knocking my hustle

The house wit' the auto

'Cause I got to

Just be safe

I'm packing just in case

Hitting the block

Everything is erased

Feelings go up in a blaze

Smokin' weed 'cause I crave

So I can suppress what I really feel

Don't ever flake

Maintain to be real

Making a change, know that I'm still ill for real!

I'm out.

-Jay B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There's no question that you have real skills when it comes to rapping real thoughts. We are impressed. But at the same time, some of those real thoughts bother us. Even though we know you are convinced that staying strapped is for your own protection, we are not buying it. (Just yesterday, a 19-year-old was killed in a drive-by in San Francisco; he was carrying a fully loaded automatic. They found it on his dead body...) As for suppressing what you really feel through drugs, we can sympathize with the desire to do that, but we can also see that if you keep your true feelings suppressed for too long, they find unhealthy ways of expressing themselves. Even acknowledging that you're "still ill for real," tell us about some of those changes you're thinking about making.

My Message to the Future

I want you to grow with a clear mind, meaning not being around a gang or people who get into trouble with the law.

I want to see you be someone in life so that when you get older you want have to go through the things I did which is started a gang and been an outlaw to the streets.

I want you to grow up and graduate so you won't have to look for a seven and eight dollar job when you get out of school.

I want to see you go to college so I can be proud of you so I can have something to remember when I pass away and not see you don't bad like being in the streets being a lowlife.

-Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a beautiful message. Can we turn that right around and say that we wish these same things for you? A clear mind, being something in life, growing up and graduating, going to college? It's not too late, you can do all these things. This little document here is full of hope for the future, but your future can start right now. What would you have to change to make these changes happen?

I Wonder

I wonder why I do the things I do.
 I wonder why I never listen when my granny told me stay
 in a school
 I wonder why I get into so much trouble.
 I wonder why my girl said she'll leave me if I stay on the
 hustle.
 I wonder why I been why away from home for a whole
 damn year.
 I wonder why the Lord gave that man back his ear.
 I wonder why these youngstas try to act hard.
 I wonder why they six feet or behind bars.
 I wonder why the poor have to beg for a plate.
 I wonder why there's thin lines between love and hate.
 I wonder why I'm writing this to the beat.
 I wonder when I'm ever gon' see you again.

-Lb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem about all the mysteries of life leaves us with wonder too, because it's wonderFUL... but the only thing we can answer in it is that you'll see us again, every Tuesday, like a clock with a number two pencil attached.

Why Is The World Coming To An End

why is the world coming to an end
 is it because of violence, drugs
 money that everybody needs
 or is it the people taking over
 buying these buildings, having greed
 because i grew up in the 'hood for sixteen years
 and now i feel i'm ready to get out
 i got an education, i have mind skills and i'm gonna
 make it through these streets i have no doubt
 where i was raised, drugs are being sold
 people are getting robbed, the kids are getting shot
 because these drug dealers think they own the block
 so they ain't gonna get off the spot
 world still gon' come to an end
 'cause i had my chance to shine
 at the age of fifteen riding in a benz
 didn't care about family because i still thought
 the would was gonna end
 walkin' on the tight rope reaching my goals
 and the string start to bend
 if i'm gonna leave this world
 i hope i die in a peaceful grace
 walking on the streets of oakland
 i don't think i can leave this place
 but the world gonna come to an end one day

-Alan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Apocalypse means the end of the world, as we know this place — but that can happen planet-wide, to a nation, a people, a group, or to an individual soul with a sudden revelation of grace. What would grace look like to a young soul walking down the streets of Oakland where illegal drugs are sold, house licks hit, people killed in the name of "keeping it lit" in a place so cold bodies too are bought and sold in the name of "pimping it"? What would grace look like on the streets of Oakland day or night? It would look like you caring about yourself, your health and your family's, too; 'cause the old world has already ended for you, so you choose to live in the new. Even if pollution is all around you, you choose to live in the solution 'cause grace has found you — and that's the end of the world, apocalypse (which means literally an unveiling, unmasking, revealing of the truth) in you. It happens when you're surrendering to the corruption is through — that's the end of the old world and beginning of a new!

How Do I Feel Today

I feel like running away from Camp because I don't get along with some of these people — but I am not going to run! So, I feel okay, today. I like to write to The Beat because it makes me tell my feelings.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your emotional honesty married to wisdom, makes you a writer to whom we always listen with respect.

To All

this is to the kids after me
 don't come to jail
 don't throw your life away
 take your life and hold onto it
 because all you do in jail is waste time
 this is to my squad locked up
 i hate to see us locked up
 we always go to jail
 for money mostly
 but people don't see us cry
 on the inside
 people don't see us thinking about
 how are we' going to make it in life
 people don't hug or kiss
 our mothers for us
 when we need them to
 me and my squad come to jail
 one by one by one
 i don't want none
 of my kids of grandkids
 to even think about our squad
 because i will feel embarrassed
 it's not like i don't love my squad
 i love my bra-bra's
 it's just that we should have
 stayed in school
 and made the right decisions
 let's do this
 no more houses
 they know what i mean
 and the reason i say that is because
 school is the biggest house lick
 you could ever get away with
 so after the group homes
 or the r-o-p's or these
 camps or maybe y-a's
 let's do our time and hit that lick
 that school lick
 you feel me
 we go to jail
 too many times
 not to try something new
 but anyway i still love my squad
 and my little ones
 so stay up

-Sunny D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every week you lift it up another notch, level by level you raise consciousness from the thoughts that got you here to thoughts that will get you free and keep you clear of committing crimes that have you doing time year after year, you and your entire squad and the little ones too if they do what you were taught, what your deeds teach — house licks or any other quick-money fix is the way to live in the street, was what you once believed, but now you see, that just leads to jails and penitentiaries. While education leads to a good j-o-b that will both pay your bills and keep you free! Thanks for the words of wisdom to all those caught up or headed for the juvenile justice system. Peace in the streets and prosperity to all those in need (it may sound like prayer, but it's a way of life to those who see).

I Am

I am the first and the last
 I am water and fire
 I am the past and present
 I am the soul that live within

-Smacks B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: For such a short poem, this is packed with meaning. What else can you tell us about the soul that lives within you?

Camp Will Be My Last Placement

Camp Sweeney will be my last and final placement. I been to two placements, and this is my second. No more after this! I've had hell time to think about my actions, the shhh I've done.

Basically I have wasted my whole teenage life in the Hall and group homes and now Camp Sweeney, but from now on, I'm going to try to do right and stay out the system. Man, it's no fun being locked up or in a group setting! I wish I was free everyday!

I've been with my girl for three years, but now I only get to see her on the weekends. We have fun, but it's not the same as when I used to be with her everyday. It's hard to concentrate when I'm in here. Still, she has a lot of love for me! She's always there for me, and I love her for that. We have fun on weekends, but when I'm away back at Camp, it's hard thinking if she gonna stay true. She showed it on the outs, but it's different now and that's hard. She say she is true and don't trip. She loves me a lot, but anything can happen.

-Lil' C, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you can only turn that anxiety around and make it a motive to stay doing right, no matter what, then you will make this your last placement in the system — and you will stay out and free. You now see how much easier it makes maintaining a loving relationship, 'cause you keep that contact and intimacy fresh. But no matter what happens, the lesson is the same — so keep doing your best to pass the test and leave the system and its mess behind forever. Then everything will get better.

Dear Life

for each moment there's a new lesson
and every time it will be testin'

i understand life, is what you make it
but life, every chance to jab, you get to take it
my mind and soul have been strong many years
and times i expected defeat i conquered fears
but the music is off and my spirit stopped dancing
now the need for that adrenaline rush is demanding
i felt desperate and lost in a circle
somewhat needed a miracle
i stand strong with the love surrounding me
able to cross more than the ground beneath me

-Kid Hustle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That adrenaline rush can push you past fear of outside dangers, but courage is facing the demons within as part of yourself not strangers. That doesn't mean surrendering to them, but taking stock of everything hidden there within. With love surrounding you, maybe you can find the strength in you, to ask the tough questions and answer true — and this takes the most courage to see through, to be willing to change your point of view and defeat the daily uneasiness it creates in you, when you seek to change how you think and what you do.

Dear Life

Life to me is kickin' it with the homeboys and doin' whatever the heck I want. That's a problem for me, because when I do what I want, I always do bad things and hurt my loved ones.

I know the life I live is bad, but what can I do if I enjoy this life. I hear my son crying for me and think of doing good. Then that is when something always happens. So what can I do if I stay banging my color. When I try to do good, it just don't feel like me. I really think this is the life for me.

-Lil' Unt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Let's imagine you explaining this to your son one day. "Son, I wanted to be a good father, but when I did good, it just didn't feel like me." Where's the love in that? Are you really asking us what you can do, or just making another excuse? 'Cause you can start re-educating your heart. Have some good square fun with your family and your baby son every day or you'll be somewhere locked up missing them every single day. Is that really the life for you? We can talk but only you can choose.

What If It Was You?

On the streets where I stay
People get killed every day
Kids with no mom and dad by their sides
Drugs
Drugs was all they knew
With no money, no family
Robbing was all they can do
Now on probation
Taking pee test twice a week
Smelling dirty because he had nowhere to sleep
His heart is stuck to the game,
But his mind wants to change
His girlfriend is a prostitute
Just to make some extra change
Ring, the sound of the phone
It was his girlfriend
Telling him to come home
He doesn't 'cause he's with the next female
Not knowing she has HIV
He get home and make love to his girlfriend
She's pregnant
Now she's sick
Two months later
He died from a disease
That he could not fix.

-Nuke, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a frightening scenario, Nuke. Did this happen to someone you know, or is it just a warning?

Do Right Or Go to Jail Like Me

I got news from my PO today, saying that since I'm eighteen, I got to go to Santa Rita for three months. But it's nothing. I'm gonna go do my time and be home before I know it.

But I just don't want to get a PFN number. And I don't want my mom and my dad having to visit me through that glass window. See, I was thinking I was gonna go to a juvenile program, but when my PO said Santa Rita — it changes your whole gut feeling! 'Cause see, now I got to deal with men that are twice my age.

So my words to everybody that is reading this: Have your fun while you're young, 'cause when you hear the word Rita, you're gonna wish you went to school and did right. So do your time, get out, and be coo! I'm out.

-Scotty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh man, you ran the string out just a little too long. You've been standing on the threshold of changing your life for a long time, but never have been able to make the commitment to making change stick. You learned how to get through a program but not how to change your life on the outs — and that, you now know, is what it's really all about. So when you're released, don't go back to the same old ways of the street.

Momma

My mother is the strongest person that I know. I say that because she has been through a lot in her forty-six years. She raised three kids on her own.

At the age of twenty-six she was shot by my older sister's father. My older sister was eight at the time. This was in 1986. She has been in a wheelchair ever since. After that accident she had two more kids.

She has been a single mother most of her parenthood. She did a good job raising us. She always made sure there was a roof over our heads and food on the table and I don't know how, but she did. We always had/have good Christmas' and holidays. I love her for it.

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your mom sounds like an inspiring person. Good for you for recognizing her stren

Hey What's Up Beat

This is ya boi, T-bone, writing you. Another day from inside these walls of the Hall. Thankfully, I only have seventeen more days until I get released, the day I enter society again, fortunately, as a determined and focused, young man.

I have had a long time to think, meditate, and plan. Now I feel more than ready to pick up where I left off. The only difference is, now I'm saved, sober, and convinced to live a sober, prosperous life. As I have been told, "If you have no plan, you plan to fail."

So let me tell you a little about my plan. I plan to first of all to move into and furnish my apartment, which I have been blessed to have awaiting me. Luckily, I was smart enough to get my GED, (which I kinda regret though, 'cause I want my high school diploma). Next I will enroll in Laney or Merritt College to get my associate's degree in sociology, then transfer to Cal State and get my bachelor's degree in something else related to that. I plan to then go on to get my masters and even possibly my doctorate (PhD).

Eventually I want to end up working in a place just like this if not this very place and then move up the ladder to be a supervisor and someone of importance, respect and authority. My singing group will probably take off and end up being the number-one gospel group in the Bay Area if not in the country as a whole. I will one day have a family, wife, kids and, hopefully, grandkids.

But if I can say one thing that can help or influence someone else, it would be this: Being in juvenile hall or in any other lockdown facility is not the end. You can change your life at any time. Use this time of incarceration to think about how to improve yourself, then do it. Think of this place as only a stepping stone to something greater later — from ya brother, the infamous T-Bone.

-T-Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're on the right road, so long as you continue to do the next right thing, take it one step at a time, and make every day productive in some way. Soon you'll be doing more productive tasks in a day than you did in a month when you were out there doing drugs and whatever else. And remember to look for progress, not perfection — don't let any slips, mishaps or setbacks give you an excuse to change your positive direction. As for your regret getting that GED, why not get a high school diploma, too. You don't have to rush off to college, do you? It's not a matter of how fast you accomplish each goal, but how committed you remain to accomplishing what you set out to accomplish. You've done "fast" and it didn't last, so don't make the same mistakes as in the past. Tried and true, take it slow to do the new you, and it will all eventually be cool.

My Cold Point

One of the coldest times of my life was when I was on the run, but not because people was turning they back on me but because it's just a messed up situation when you think about it, cause you know you could go down at any time.

And me I had to actually watch my back for the undercover cops. So that usually kept me cold, knowing that I could be locked up at any time. So what I liked to do to keep me sane was not smoking and drinking, although I like to do that but kickin' it with my main squeeze, cause she just knows me better than I know myself and she's always good to talk to and no matter how many girls I talk to she's the one I all at the end of the night.

I also like to listen to music 'cause rhythm is life and life is rhythm.

That's what I did when I was at a cold point in my life.

-Rae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There was an old movie that came out in the 1980's called *The Big Chill*. And in the poster for it they wrote "In a cold world you need your friends to keep you warm." Sounds like you had that — at least one friend, someone that loved you no matter what. And yes, music is rhythm, and rhythm is life, what a great way of saying it.

Think About It/Write About It

I turned eighteen in here last year, and now I'm pretty close to graduating high school. All I need is four credits in American Government.

Well, anyway, throughout the course assignments I do, there are sections called "Think About/Write About It", where I have to answer questions about what I just read. So I was just thinking about how that could be applied to anything.

I know some people love writing, so it's nothing for them to pick up a pen and some paper and create something. Me? Well, I really hate writing; so to me it's like doing work. But as much as I dislike writing, I realize how useful it can be to write, keep writing, be it to relieve stress, anger or just to express your feelings.

Or maybe you just like looking back and seeing how much you wrote, like me! Whatever the reason may be that you write, keep writing. Because, whether you believe it or not — it does help! I've learned this through my experience, writing.

-R, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe writing is even more important for you than it is for someone who just plain love writing, because one of the things you've learned is that working at something that doesn't come natural to you, can be good for you. Work can be a good thing! In any event, we're glad that writing helped you make it through your incarceration (by the time you're reading this, you'll be free!), and we hope it helps you stay free, too, by helping you think things through on paper, then reading it later.

You, Life

Dear life: When you first got me into this place, I was devastated. I was very depressed. But now I thank you for bringing me into this disgusting place. Even though I still don't like it, I thank you, because I've gotten a lot wiser in here.

Well, I've made a lot of smart choices and I plan to keep on doing that when I get out. I guess it's just something that I really needed, just to realize that I am a very intelligent person, that God really does have a special position for me in this world, and that violence is not the way to go! When I get out, I plan to keep on doing concrete and making my money legally. Also I plan to go to the boys' and girls' club and join in some sports and counsel young kids.

Also I want to just spend more time with my little brother and sister and show them how to do right, because I definitely do not want them to follow in my footsteps. That would just break my heart, and I'd blame myself, not them — because they would have learned it from me. So I'm just going to make up the time with my loved ones that I spent away from them.

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You definitely have your heart in the right place now. And it sounds like you have a good plan in place to help you keep on making good decisions once you're free again. Violence is not the way. Now that you know it, you can counsel youngsters, and when they get dazzled by myth of the thug life, you can tell them you've been there and one that, and it ain't what it's cracked up to be. You can't control anyone's actions but your own. Still it can only be good for you to spend time with your younger siblings, offering them love, guidance — and fun that doesn't get you involved with criminals or guns.

: Being in juvenile hall or in any other lockdown facility is not the end. You can change your life at any time. Use this time of incarceration to think about how to improve yourself, then do it.

Tui-Tui

Well, what's up, Beat? This is Tui-Tui from the Oakland, you know. Well, what I'm writing about is my name. Some people always ask what do that means?

Well, I've had that name since I was a youngsta. My uncle tells me he named me Tui-Tui when I was a kid. And my brother tells me he gave me the name, too. But when I was a kid, every time I wanted my "te-ta" (which means bottle), I used to say that. So when I did say that, my grandma and them knew I wanted my bottle. I never cried for it; I just used to say, "Tui-tui! Tui-tui!" And ever since then, I've had the name Tui-Tui. It just stuck with me.

So people were always playing with me and calling me like "Tu-Tu" or "Twi-Twi" — and would get it wrong all the time. My black brothers seem to get it wrong, but they try as best as they can. And, yes, I'm Mexican, but I love my name and will never change it, unless I get hot wit' it. But when you see me you know what to say: "What's what, Tui-Tui!" And I give my props to all in here facing time. This is ya homeboy, Tui-Tui de Oakland, saying — keep yo heads up and stay strong within these walls. From yo' patna, Tui-Tui.

-Tui-Tui, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If maybe sometimes when we say "Tui-Tui" fast, it sounds like "Twi-Twi", it's not 'cause we don't know your name but just that we say things to fast and smash sounds all together like that. No disrespect intended. Man, we remember you when you were a youngster in the shorties' unit and wrote those deep, deep autobiographical pieces from birth to the present. Then you were out and back, and wrote about how you messed up but also how you got by on the run selling drugs (of course, that's messing up, too, even when you seem to be getting away with it, 'cause it's only a matter of time, living that life, before you get caught up for something or other). Then you were out, to a group home, and back now again. You can't keep running or they'll send you to YA. If you're lucky enough to get Camp this time, work on getting your high school diploma or GED while you're here. Then when you get out, make money legally so you can stay free and clear of the system. Enough in-and-out, stop the cycle before prison!

Dear Life: Why Is It Like This?

Life, why is it like this? What's up, Beat? This is Lazy, stuck at 150 Hall. I was transferred from Hillcrest, but I wanna say what's up to all!

Life is a game. We all didn't choose to play, we were forced to. But what we can do, is play the game wisely, and think about the choices you make before you roll the dice. I've been locked up for every month this year except January, in and out, in and out. Catching a new charge is as easy as catching a cold. We don't want to, but it happens.

It feels like this game is set up for a ninja to lose. My max time almost equals my age, plus I'm locked in a cage, doing time that don't even count. I been incarcerated for a month, went to court yesterday, in and out in no more then two minutes. Judge said, "Come back in another month." Got a charge with two pending in the 'Sco. I missed my moms b-day; couldn't even call her, 'cause these collect calls. I missed Mother's Day, plus couldn't visit my grandma's grave.

But every night there's something we can do — pray! Have good faith. Believe in the Lord. You gotta feel it in your heart and fight the temptations of the flesh, like it says in the Good Book. Life, that's just the way it is.

-Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everything you write makes a lot of sense, but now, however the game is set up, you need to think your way all the way through to winning. That may mean you need to pick up stakes altogether, choose a new game, and start at the beginning. Now we're not talking about switching from selling dope to house licks or anything like that, but getting yourself off the grind. Set your mind to how and where you can find a legal job, then go after it with all you've got. And if you don't get that one, make your job, looking for a job every day. If you're still in school, get that GED or high school degree 'cause it will help you get a better paying j-o-b, or rise from a job where you break in until you're wearing a supervisor's pin or a manager's grin. Pray like it all depends on God, and act like it all depends on you!

We Gotta Eat Beat

Eat, eat, eat, eat, eat, no sleep
All nighters
Just gotta eat, eat, eat.
If I gotta make you bleed so what
I still got to eat, eat, eat.
They say be thankful for what you got but I need more.
In fact if I had all the money in the world
They need to make some more.
Eat eat eat we don't never get full.
If I gotta take meals for the next three years then so be it.
I gotta eat, eat, eat.
I strip thugs that say they full.
I rob pimps that say they ain't hungry.
I gotta eat, eat, eat. So you better be easy for I take off
your plate
So just better be easy. . .

-Dave, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This flow shows you at the top of your game, from the humor to the rhythm to the way you understand how desperate hunger isn't just physical, it's mental. The need for more, can take over everything ... on the other hand, to take your metaphor, how much do you have to eat eat eat before you choke choke choke?

Mother's Day

A day a daughter and a mother should be together.
I lost my mom
And it seems as it is the weather
But it's ok
I'm getting well and better
Mama told me never to lie
But all are promised to die
She told me to keep my enemies close by my side
So I won't have to worry about someone...
Stabbing and killing me to die
She always told me to keep my eye's open
And be aware
And never fear or to be scared
She always told me
It's not the length of your hair
She told me never to have no doubt or fear
She told me to be the best that I can be...
And always strive to succeed.

-A-Moss, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A mother's advice lives on forever. Rip to your mom. Now are you using your mother's advice to your advantage?

My Momma

My momma is my African queen.
My mom is the one that brought me here to this earth.
She was the one to get me to stop banging the turf.
My momma is my pastor, teacher and friend balled up
into one.
Mom is always out the house visiting me.
Although I make mistakes she always forgives me.
My momma wants the best for me, but I always think I
know what's best for me.
My mom been blessed with a great life being a pastor
with kids even though sometimes we mess up.
My mom's love will always forgive me and my brothers
and my sister. My mom and dad love each other.
One love.

-Loving Child, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful family. Mother's are amazing. Somehow they keep peace and love in a family. She is truly the Queen.

Theither Times Three Topics

1. Walkin' a Mile In Your Shoes

Check game pep play. You should give me a dollar for this fresh ass game I'm bout to give you. Can't no ninja or female walk a mile in my shoes. I'm too solid for most out there in the game. I been doin' this shit. Ninjas be suckas.

Look, my dad died when I was seven and my Mom had lupus since I was 13_. I been in jail since I was 14 and I'm 17 now. I do too much and others don't do enough. I been gettin' money. Playin' with thangs, and I been a smart black man.

Why you ninjas wanna hate? My first offense I did a year, but I remain the same and solid. I did a lot but it's a time and place to speak on that gangsta shhh. The game owe me one. The game gon' touch you fake ninjas.

2. The saddest things I own is my RIP hoodies. I got a lot of pictures of my dead daddy. I can't stand being sad, but I believe that can't nobody stop me from being me. I'm mad I don't own my freedom. But it's good soon I'll be back. Thug wit it!

3. The best summer I had...was when I was 15. I was on one with that thug family. We was holdin' it down trying to get rich fast, but I had to get back to help my mom. Shit was serious. I did no playing. But last summer I was locked up. I hope not this summer. In the summer I go dumb! I'm going to flip the script this summer.

-Theither, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Reading what you write sometimes makes us want to bang our head on the desk while we type. Maybe because it's so hard seeing you bang your head on that same wall. Lord knows you've suffered real pains in your life, but do you think the answer is all this the stupid life you live? Mistreating women, gettin' money you can't keep, getting locked up? For year??? While your mom is sick? Are you crazy? The game can't touch you? The game has you flat on your back and you can't even see it. And you are so smart, and you have so much heart, and you are so dedicated to your legacy, to the perfectionism of wanting to have everything just right (it shows in the pride you put in the pieces you give to us each week). Why are you wasting it on gangster bullshhh? You have other choices. If you think you don't, tell us why to our faces or on paper. We're ready.

My Relationship Is More Important Than Money

If I didn't have to worry about money I would constantly worry about my relationship. I mean during my "time out" in here. I'm worrying about my relationship extremely. I'm trying to work to perfection to make my baby happy.

I do many things to not act my age, but being sixteen I'm still a kid. The things that people complain about are simple things kids do. My baby don't like it because the probation counselors have a problem with it. I guess it's because I'm in an institution. I mean I try to act my age but everything that I say or do is inappropriate or negative. I try to please everyone by staying as quiet as possible but that don't last too long at all.

I respect what he's telling me because I know he's telling me right. Me being hard headed and all, I have a hard time listening but I have to respect it because I love him.

-Tooter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tooter, it sounds like you are a lot more mature than you know. The best thing you can do is learn from your mistakes and from others. You seem to be going down a good path. Stop being so hard-headed and listen to what people are telling you. Focus on what's important to you.

My Special Momma...

Hey Beat! You all know who it is, it's your boy Lil' Bizzy from Oakland.

The topic I picked was my momma, because no matter what's happening she will always be there for me. When I was younger I used to think that my mom was on my back just to get me mad like telling me to stay in the house and stop flying my colors.

I used to think that every thing the homeboys told me was right, but now that I look at it, it is the other way around. My mom was right and some of the homeboys were wrong.

Every day I think about my mom I think about all the shhh I put her through and it makes me feel like shhh. That's why I love my momma because no matter all the shhh I put her through she is always by my side and that is the one and only woman that will always have my heart no matter what.

Forget a wifey. All I need is my momma, all right then Beat I got to go because time's up and hopefully I'm going to a group home this week. So for all out there reading this keep a homeboy in your prayers. One love.

-Lil' Bizzy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know you're becoming a man when you realize that all the hard time your mom gives you about not hanging on the streets is because she loves you and wants you safe, not because she wants to make you mad.

Last Time

Wassup, Beat? This yo' boy J-Gutta comin' straight out of B5 with the two thumbs up. Man Beat, I'm so ready to get windy out of YGC. even thought I ain't going home. I'm going to CYA for 90 days to see if I'm fit to do my real time. I ain't ready for the Y. It's not me.

This gone be my last time here in YGC because I'm 18 now and if I do some more criminal crimes, it's straight to 850 — no pass go, collect \$200. It's straight to jail, nothing but water and bread. I'm gone end up looking like one of them kids on the hungry channel talking 'bout, "Please send 5 cent so we can feed this child." I'm thinking how the hell you gone feed somebody with 5 cent. If they know somewhere you can get a meal for 5 cent please tell me.

Anyways, back to the subject of me leaving, I ain't gone lie, I'm gone miss YGC a little bit, especially the counselors Coogler, Tee, Semien, Baldwin, Satch, Guerrero, Wood, Louse, Gibson and the rest of the counselors I was cool with.

Well Beat, I gotta kick rocks to CYA. See you in the funny papers. So materialistic, so well connected, just ask about me, so well respected! Stop lying stop snitching productions. Two thumbs up!

-J-Gutta B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, we agree that you're not ready for the Y because we don't think anyone is ready for the Y. But you've got a good head on your shoulders, and you know how unforgiving the criminal justice system is, especially when you're 18 and over! So we encourage you to avoid all beefs at the Y, since they are traps to add time to your sentence. You are smart enough to know what you have to do, even when it's not something that you want to do. It is refreshing to read your gratitude to so many counselors here at YGC. It's always nice to say thank you when it is sincere. Good luck!

This gone be my last time here in YGC
because I'm 18 now and if I do some more
criminal crimes, it's straight to 850 —
no pass go, collect \$200.

I'm Out In Eight Days

I only have eight more days. I don't even know what I'm going to do, right when I get out, but I have some ideas. I will probably smoke a Newport in the parking lot. Then, after that, I will just kick it for the weekend and look for a job on Monday. I hope someone will give me a job! I just want something to take up my time, so I won't be bored and do something stupid.

I can't wait till I see that open sky without having to see barbed wire surrounding me. I never thought I would see the day, but it is coming soon! When I see freedom I will probably yell out my lungs at the top of my voice, and jump up and down! I hope I don't walk with my hands behind my back. You feel me?

Thank you, Beat, for me being able to put my thoughts on paper and for your reading it. I mean it — thank you!

-Phillip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't begrudge you that 'Port or chilling over the weekend. Just being free will feel like the greatest luxury the world has to offer! And we admire your plan to start looking for work on Monday. We, too, hope you find a job soon, but if you don't — don't quit on yourself, keep looking — make looking for a job into a job that you go to every day till you land a job. And that day when you're desperate but keep looking, someone will feel your desire to work and will hire you on the spot. Don't stop.

Sometimes

Sometime I wanna fly, yo'
Sometime I got money and I still feel broke

Sometime I want to get a nine-to-five
'Cause ain't no money selling dope

Sometime I wanna die for real
'Cause my ninja Marcus got killed

Sometime I wanna pop a pill
'Cause sometime life get too real
And I just can't deal

Sometime I wanna get out the game
But I'm in too deep
And it's hard for a ninja to change

So don't be mad at me
All I know is that cash alley

-Lil' Stacks B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you say it's hard for a ninja to change, what you're really saying is that since "cash alley" is all you know, thinking about giving up the familiar and jumping into something new is hard. And it is hard. But we've seen you growing up in these cells, and we have to believe that this is also hard. So your choices are not easy versus hard, but hard versus hard. What makes staying in the game seem easier is its familiarity to you. But experience tells us that the fear of change is often much harder to deal with than the actual change itself. So, once again, Lil' Stacks, we urge you to put your wonderful heart and mind together to find a way out of this downward spiral which can only make your future even harder. Make those hard sacrifices today for some peace of mind tomorrow.

When It's Cold Outside...

It's like when you see somebody do something wrong and you don't do nothing. I stay warm by doing something. I mean in the heart. So doing something right is warm. And doing things wrong is cold.

So get a coat and a beanie. Think before you do, ok?
Do something right and stay out the cold.

-Deandre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great advice. Stay warm.

Dear Ms. Wadud

I miss you a lot. I know you feel sad too because your aunty died and your mom got sick. That happened to my family too.

My uncles and dad were on the way home and then it was a terrible accident. We knew my uncles and dad had died in the terrible accident.

And I'll always love you Ms. Wadud, your like my mother to me. I'm always not gonna be alone because I have you and feel sorry that you aunty died. I always care about you, I miss you. We all love you in the unit. I love you.

-Tommy Too, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are certain life experiences that we can all relate to. When someone close to us passes away, we feel a tremendous loss. It is very comforting to know that there are others that care. This is a very sweet piece Tommy Too. We love you too, Wadud.

Remember The Times

Remember the times we had, happy and sad,
Remember how we hustled, the money made us glad.
I miss you baby boy we should still kick it together,
Remember the coats we went grindin' in, genuine leather.
I still remember your favorite number, lucky number seven,
We still gonna kick it, but just wait 'till I get to heaven.
Remember we used to say what's up to the amigos,

The ones that bang,
we used to drive up to 'em, dip and swang.
But I got a cool patna now, his name is Buddamilk,
He could rap hella good, his flows are like silk.
OK, I love you cousin, you were always funny and silly,
I'ma miss you, RIP Baby Willie.

-Lamarr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you see any connection between the grindin' and hustlin' and your friend's death? Is it possible that you're putting your own life in danger by glorifying all the scandalous? We don't want you going to heaven any time soon.

Real Men Respect Females

to all the females
don't feel sad
mad or discouraged
if ya boy ain't loving you
like he should
and you invest all your time
and even money
and he ain't acting right
leave him alone
time to go messing with another
females — leave if he's
beating you and calling you names
saying you ain't shhh without him
leave if he say he a pimp
and doin' it with your money
'cause without it he ain't shhh
real men supposed to love and care
honor and respect females
and treat them well
you ninjas need to be your girl's backbone
and she's your step up
it don't hurt to love a female

-Baby Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's some good advice to the ladies and the men. A lady needs to leave if he isn't treating her right, 'cause it doesn't get better walking that road night after night. And a man needs to help his lady keep from going crazy in a world that's full of shady deeds in a world governed not by love but greed. Yeah, everyone needs money, but love is not pimping your honey or beating your girl — not even in the cruelest of worlds.

Why You Mad At Me

why you mad at me
 'cause i'm black
 and got more money than you
 or 'cause i'm black
 and i'm getting richer than you
 i don't know why people hate me
 or why they want to kill me
 but i ain't mad at you
 so why you mad at me
 'cause i'm eating on these streets
 surviving on these streets
 living to die on these streets
 i don't know why
 but i love these streets
 and i ain't mad at the street
 for what they done to me
 they made me a man
 so i'm gone die like one
 i walked this path
 nobody but me
 so it's gon' be me to suffer
 nobody else but me
 i'm going to be eighteen
 on the tenth of july
 that's two months from now
 and that's when it going down
 they going to release me
 or they going to send me
 to the c-y-a for five
 but i'm gon' do what i got to do
 and i'm gone make this happen
 get out — do me
 so don't hate don't get mad
 oh yeah, you mad at me all ready.

-Young Guez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At least we can print your words this week, even if we do think you ought to be mad at the street for sending you up to YA for five, if you go there. And if you don't, all the more reason to stay mad at the street so you don't waste this chance at freedom. You say you got to eat, but the street will eat you alive and spit you back into the system for five, ten, fifteen with an L, 'cause the streets got no more love for you than the devil in hell. You may love the street, but the street don't love you — you say so yourself with all that "I don't know why" Whether you understand why or not, you attract haters to your spot.

Pray For Me

I have a baby girl that is eight months old, and I feel like I am not in her life. So I try to get to see her for visiting time, but my mother don't even come see me. She told me she won't come no more, and she was not playing neither. But it's okay, because I know that she misses me just like I miss my baby girl and her mother, too.

So I hope someone will pray for me, because they are blaming me for something I did not do. I wish that I won't do time for it. So just pray for me that it don't happen to me. Put me in your prayers. I pray every night for it not to happen. So keep my hopes up for me. I'm trying to keep my eyes up to the hills whence comes my help, coming from the Lord. If I was to have one more chance, I would change my life all the way around.

I go to court on May twenty-second, at 8:45am. And when I get out of incarceration, I am going to Mexico to live, to get away from all the troubles here, me and my family. So pray for me! I need to get out, to take care of my family. I was doing that before I came back. I was trying not to come back. I got to get home to my pretty baby and her mother!

-Sarillo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are in our prayers. This is a bad place to be for someone who did commit a crime, and it's worse for someone who didn't. We wish you all the best on getting released and getting your life together again with your family — and your baby girl! How did you get caught up in trouble again? What makes life here harder for you to stay out of trouble than life in Mexico, or is your family moving to Mexico for a different reason after your release?

Alone in These Streets

lying, thinking
 last night how to find my soul a home
 where water is not thirsty and bread loaf is not stone
 i came up with one thing
 and don't believe i'm wrong that nobody but nobody
 can make it out here in oakland alone
 alone, all alone
 nobody, but nobody can make it out here alone
 there are a lot of millionaires with money they can't even
 use
 their wives run around like black queens
 their kids sing rap music
 they've got expensive doctors to cure their hearts of stone
 but nobody, nobody can make it out here alone
 now if you listen closely i'll tell you what I know
 the only way i get through my day
 is if i got purple to smoke
 i drown myself with hennessy privilege or pop a pill
 hell, going to school wasn't really a big deal
 but when my pockets held nothing but cotton
 that's when i knew it was that time that i got it
 got my money that is
 but don't trip it's just hood bizz
 so sit back and thizz on the block
 that's why it's not easy out here in oakland all alone
 (to be continued)

-Tl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write a lament that makes a heart heavy as cement shoes on the feet of someone who is viewing the bay on the bottom of his worst day. 'Cause purple, thizz and hennessy, is no way to reverse your direction when you're all alone in the streets of the ghetto in need of a spiritual resurrection, 'cause drowning your pain with drugs just insures you'll never rise above the haters and thugs that would just as soon see you fall to a bullet or five-oh's call if there's a knock to bust that used to be y'all's. You've reached an age where you can get a job to make your pay, and that's the only way you'll rise from the street and at the same time keep shackles off your feet. All the more, if you're all alone, you've got to do it right to make it on your own. Your writing confirms that you've got a mind sharp enough to turn your life into something more than a drug-consumer out all night.

Don't Do What I Did

If I could write a letter to my grandchildren I would tell them to stay out of trouble and break the family cycle so they don't have to go through what I did and so they won't do the things that I do and so they wouldn't see the things I seen and end up in the same place as me. I would tell them everything I know and show them the way, so they can have a good life and so they won't be like me.

-Dirty Nell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As you know, the best advice you can give is to be a good example. So don't think your grandkids are going to listen to you contradict yourself. If you want to be a good example to them, break the cycle yourself. They will be so proud.

Learning To Ride

When I was very young my brother bought me a bike. He was eighteen. The bike was red, white, and blue. When he gave me the bike I was happy. My dad was going to teach me to ride, but he was working a lot and I was impatient, so I taught myself. It took me a while to learn. I fell a lot, and got a lot of bruises. It took at least a month. But when I finally learned, I was happy.

-Jose, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a lovely story Jose. Are you as persistent today? Do you work as hard now for what you want as you did when you were four?

Freedom Wishes

Ask me how I'm feelin' I say slightly vicious
Sittin' in a cell makin' hella freedom wishes

Wishin' I was out there chillin' with my dudes
But instead I'm in juvi eatin' cold county food

Feelin' contained I gotta ask to blow my nose
In a hall full of dudes, county shoes and county clothes

I'm thinkin' to myself this ain't the life for me
I could be at home or chillin' with my wife to be

I could be out improving my chances to get to the NFL
Instead I'm in a cell also known as mini hell

But I'm gonna keep my head up steady striving for the best
'Till God call me home and he puts my soul to rest

Haters won't pull me down, came too far to quit
So I'm gonna get out and make livin' my life legit

The ball is on my field and I'm not gon' let it fumble
Rest in peace to my folks who died in the struggle

-Young Hyphy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've got a poet, an artist in The Beat today! You've gotta keep sharing your thoughtful rhymes and flows with us. Keep your head up, and do what you WANT to do. We know you have your eyes on the right path.

Dear People

I've been going through some thangs
And nobody understands me
I need my freedom back
So I can do better in this life
My life has been hard for a young playa
People close to me are getting killed
People getting shot
People on drugs
People smoke grapes
To relieve pain
People drink Henn
To take their mind
Off all the fallin' soldiers.

-Young person, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have written a powerful poem honoring the tragedy of our streets today. Congratulations.

How I Feel

What's up Beat? This is that young homie comin' at you. Well, the way I feel right now is confused. I don't know what the judge is planning to do with me. They are trialing me as an adult, and the messed up part is I'm only sixteen.

Man, I have some time over my head. I'm not really scared of doing the time because after a while I learned to deal with the fact that I will be gone for a while.

I also feel mad because I should have listened to my mom when she said stay home. But I was too hard headed to listen. Check it out, though - I'm gonna learn from my mistakes. That way I will never be in this position again.

Well Beat, I'm out of time and out of words, so I'll hit you up next time. Alrato.

-Not So Sweet Sixteen, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You're in a difficult situation, but your attitude is healthy. You can make the most of your situation by writing your thoughts and stories and reading as many good books as you can get your hands on. Do what Malcom X did. Read, read, read and read some more. Ask us for suggestions, if you'd like. See you in The Beat!

Dear Mom

I wrote you this Mother's Day card because I love you so much. I miss you a lot too. I wanted to tell you something like Ahakaren and you said, forget about those Yu-gi-oh cards and start thinking about girls.

Mom, I wanted to tell you that Ms. Wadud's mom and aunt died and she's in New York right now I miss her a lot too. She is like my grandmother to me. What I was thinking is that I thought you don't care about me no more because I am in Juvenile Hall, but didn't do nothing wrong. I came back because that wasn't a great placement for me.

-George, 150 Crew

From The Beat: George, we know about Ms. Wadud's loss and it really makes us think about special people in our lives. No matter how bad a relationship is, we have to do our best to maintain it, while we can. This is a nice note to you mom. We hope she receives it.

My Sister

Sitting at the bus stop on the summer of 2003 my sister she was the only thing I had. She was my mother, best friend, everything.

Some people don't know what they got until they're going away from you. We would go to church together; if she was there I was. When that day came—that phone call—and I got that news, I didn't know what to do. I tried killing myself but that was only a cold moment. She should be my way through all that shhh, but now I know.

-Tempest, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you lost someone really important to you, and that's never easy. We wish no one had to go through such a loss. Hopefully you can use the memory and love of your sister to help you through—it sounds like she loved you a lot and would have wanted only good things for you.

Old Time Memories Keep Me Warm?

When I was fifteen years old, and lived at home with my mother, I wanted to leave. I was tired of always being locked up all the time, I felt like a prisoner. The only places I went was on errands, and to my cousin Tina's house. So one day I decided to leave home, so I made up some weak excuse to leave, and I planned the whole thing out, and that was to leave, and live with my boyfriend.

When the time came I left, and didn't look back because I was having the time of my life. After a while I decided to go home a week before Christmas. During the time I was home visiting I started missing my boyfriend, so I ran away and hopped out of my bedroom window. And now I've been gone for about five months hustlin' tryin' a get by everyday and all that has come to an end.

Now I'm locked up in Juvie patiently waitin' to get transferred to go home. But now the only person that can help me get out is my mom. And I hate the fact that I picked a ninja over my mama. I can't be mad 'cause this is punishment. But when I do get home I'm going straight to Job Corps.

Now to comfort myself I think of old times memories. So now I pray every night to start a great, fresh, and new life.

-Sascha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like maybe you learned an important lesson through all of this running back and forth...it's a lucky thing your mom is willing to help you out. Will you be able to hold on to your new knowledge once you get out? Luck to you.

I Didn't Listen

i'm trapped with nothin' to do
 i'm trapped wit' no girls to do it too
 but beyond that i know it's a way out
 it's probably not anytime soon
 but it will happen when i least expect
 it's just like holding a smith and wesson
 without nothing to protect yo' chest in
 but I have to be strong and not lose my cool
 at first i was going to be known in the unit
 but that would be stupid
 because i will be gettin' out
 i just have to wait my turn
 i still got a whole life ahead of me
 and people who gon' always be there to support
 if only i just listen to my brother or my mother
 this bad dream would be behind me
 i know i miss things out there that i don't like to miss
 but right now i have to deal with it
 what keeps me warm is my family
 if i had a chance to be free for one day with my family
 that would make my time go by hella faster

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, you're wishin' that you did listen, but then again — that's your new mission: to start listenin' to your brother and your mother. Some of what you miss, you're better off without, but you're not better off without your family or your freedom. So what and who are good for you when you see them.

Mother

A wonderful woman who we adore —
 someone I don't want to hurt anymore.
 She gave us life. She gave us love,
 which is the greatest present
 one could receive from above.
 When the going got tough
 you got tougher
 and we wouldn't choose anyone else
 to be our mother.
 I don't have chocolates or jewels
 for you to wear. All I have
 is this card to share.

-Anibal, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This will bring a tear to her eye, but not a tear of sadness.

Memory

I heard the rain outside, dropping with a thud,
 and then I stepped into the mud.
 Even though it was raining
 I was still kicking back at the market
 with my finger on the steel,
 deciding whether or not to cock it.
 The Suburban down the block
 sixties full circle.
 Then, all of a sudden, I see light.
 There's the smell of fresh spices
 and my pop's saying:
 it's gonna be alright.

-Lil' Mikey, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wow, we don't know if this is a memory of a dream, or a dream like memory. It's ominous and hopeful at the same time. Good writing. Good poem.

My Momma

My mama is a wonderful lady. She is beautiful inside and out, and she has lots of talent. The reason I love her is because she brought me here—that is also the reason I despise her. This world is just is just not my place.

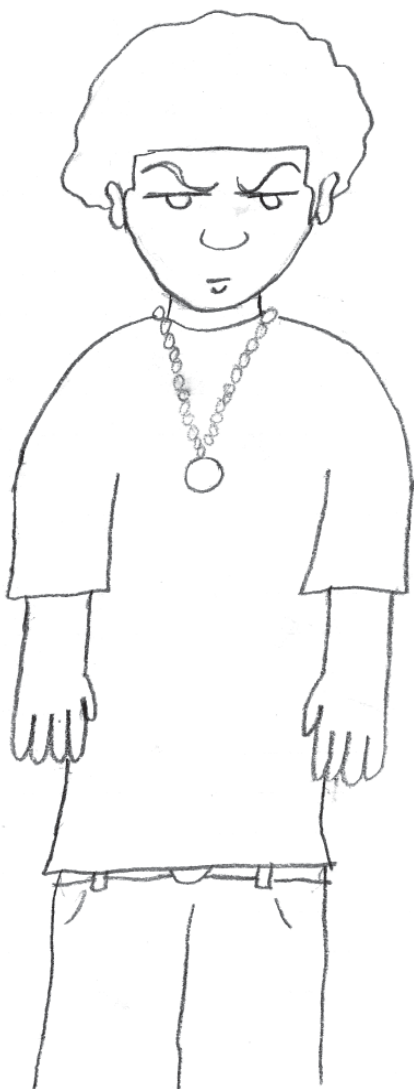
Anyway, my momma is thirty-two. She was born June 17, 1973, so she is a Gemini, that she is. Her bad side comes out sometimes, but besides that, she is cool.

My momma seems to think that I purposely placed myself here to hurt her. Now I thought she meant that she couldn't stand to see me here—well, I was wrong. Her description of hurt is making her have to come visit me, having to accept my phone calls, and going to court. Wow! How much my mom cares! I feel she loves me, but she kinda dislikes me. We have many problems and argue a lot, only it's a one-sided argument, because I don't say anything. I let the anger build up. Based on my therapist, that's a bad idea.

Well, basically, you know my momma now, but I seriously doubt that you understand our relationship that we don't have. I love my momma, I truly do. We need to express our feelings more often, but this time to each other.

-Karea, Marin

From The Beat: You have described your mother so we can get a pretty good sense of who she is. Have you ever thought about how frightened, sad, and/or helpless parents of youth in juvy may feel, because if you're in any trouble—sad, sick, depressed, stressed, there isn't too much they can do to help you until you're home and free again? You don't write too much about yourself, Karea, but you sure do seem to have an understanding of your mom's relationship with you. What do you wish your relationship with her would be? When you're not angry or resentful, can you talk to her how you'd like to see it change? What can you do to make things better? Make her life easier?



if only i just listen to my brother or my mother
 this bad dream would be behind me

When It's Cold Outside

When I'm feeling lost or all alone I just keep praying for better days. Everybody goes through ups and downs. It doesn't matter how perfect you think someone is, everyone goes through obstacles. I know I been through a lot, but I've been through so much, where my situations could only get better before they get worse. You could only stay strong. People come and go in and out of my life all the time—that's a part of growing up.

-Danielle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's true, in life there are always ups and downs, and if we can't ride the bad times through to the good, we'll be lost. Keep staying strong.

Material Destruction

Money can cause pain
 Drives people insane
 The people with it
 Sit around and complain
 Waiting for charity
 A piece of gold to pawn
 You need to pay the bills
 You can't sleep 'til dawn
 The children are hungry
 And their father is dead
 The little piece of income
 Can't keep them fed
 You look for a job
 With real determination
 They treat you like the time
 Is still segregation
 You're losing you mind
 It's only a matter of time
 Before you get a concussion
 The first step is realizing
 Money causes destruction

-Karea, Marin

From The Beat: What inspired this powerful poem? Now, maybe it's not money that's evil, but it's poverty, the lack or loss of money, that's causing all the pain. It sounds like the people in your poem who are desperate for money have tried all the legitimate means of earning it, but have kids to feed, are feeling depressed and hopeless, and are victims of racial discrimination, etc. What legitimate resources do you know about, have helped you when you needed some free food, a place to stay, cash, a job, etc., could you tell the people in your poem about, to help them out?

Fearless

Nobody knows where I am.
 Nobody knows how to find me.
 Nobody knows my true identity.
 Including me.
 I know I am fearless.
 I know I am not afraid of pain.
 But I can still feel it.
 Nothing will ever change.
 My life will always be the same.
 It's like being trapped in a box
 With a thousand killer bees.
 My fate has been decided.
 I am the girl born without the fear gene.
 Yet... I am proud.

-Karea, Marin

From The Beat: You sure are proud, and a knockout poet, Korea. Why are you so hidden from everyone, including yourself? What you do know about yourself is wonderful. What are those killer bees you write about? Confusions? Troubles? Contradictions that eternally fight within you?

Things That Happen

I saw a boat getting loaded in the water.
Then it got beached in the mud,
and a storm rolled in.
The moon came out a couple of minutes later.
We started to push and my finger got jammed.
It was dark, so we used a lantern,
a steel lantern in the form of a circle.
The lantern made light so we could work.

-Nick, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're right there Nick. We can see the heavily laden boat stuck in the mudflats. We can almost taste the air after the storm. And we're pushing and shoving right with you in the lantern light. Nice poem.

Be Like Me

Ever since
Since I started getting
Money haters see me
As a front do'
so they try to knock me

Since I'm getting money
Haters treat me like
A movie star they
All wanna watch me

Since I became a
Dope boy the bops
Love to jock me

Since money is all
That I think of
I went from being cool
Smooth to straight cocky

Since I conquered
A new style these birds
Try to mock me

Since it's only me
D-Tay can't nobody in
This world be like me.

-Donte, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's two sides to great art and poetry. Form and content. Content is what you say, Form is the style of how you say it. As form goes, this is amazing - great rhythms, good beat, we can hear it when we read it. You have serious skills and should be proud of yourself. But the content Donte...reread this, you know what you're saying? You're saying you only matter if you make money, that it's your money that brings you respect. You know what money brings you, especially dope money? It brings you fakers. Fake love, here today gone tomorrow love. It brings you danger, it brings you to - HELLO! - jail! Real money is money the cops can't ever pull out your pocket and keep for themselves. Real money you keep in a bank, so if you get jacked they only get a few twenties. Real money makes more money. And real money won't cost you your life. As for real people, well why don't you make that the topic of your next flo?

Since money is all
That I think of
I went from being cool
Smooth to straight cocky

Nobody knows where I am.
Nobody knows
how to find me.
Nobody knows my true
identity.
Including me.

Dear Life

It's been eighteen years and six days, and yet you are still a mystery to me. It wasn't until two weeks ago that I finally knew what I want to do with my life. I want to help people that are in need, and I want to make a difference in the world.

-No Name, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a shame you didn't put your name! Well, you've had a deep revelation and it could be a major turning point in your life. What sparked your sudden desire to help?

Si, Se Puede

On March 1, 2006, I took a trip to the city to participate in the immigrant march. I'm El Salvadorian and I had my flag! We walked three miles. I got sunburned. It felt good to stand up for my people. Si se puede (Yes we can.)

-Ariana, Marin

From The Beat: You go, Ariana! Did you march in San Francisco? Lots of people from our very own Beat Within office marched, too. It was a joy to see all people doing something so positive, especially marching in behalf of all those struggling to stay in the US. The march seems to have influenced a lot of politicians to reconsider some of their anti-immigrant legislation. Si, tu puedes! (Yes, you can!)

Self Control

Self control means a lot, because it can get you killed; some kids have self control but they do not use it, because they be so caught up in the game and they don't know right from wrong because of the role models they see today on TV.

That's why self - control means something -- because your parents will start to get worried because something can happen to you you can be six feet under. And I know you don't want to be locked up because the system is no jack. When you are in the system, it's hard to get out, especially if you are black. So that is why you got to use your self control.

Stop and think what you are going to do before you do it that's called self control and being smart. Because when you are locked up you are going to miss your family and friends and your girlfriend if you have one.

And when you are locked up you do not have freedom, they treat you like a jailbird. So all I got to say is be smart and use your self control and make your family proud.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is all good wisdom, and it seems like you learned it the hard way. The thing about being locked up is that it's a hard place to learn "Self" control, because the situation is always controlling you - where you sleep what you do, etc... you learn to follow rules, but is it hard to practice self-control, self-discipline? What do you do to work on that?

Worry Free Money

If I didn't have to worry about money I would buy everything I ever wanted and give money to my family and my close friends.

Everyday I would wake up thinking about what am I going to do today and what car am I going to drive and what should I wear.

I would also be thinking about my life because when you got money people start hatin' and you might get smoked so I would watch my back.

I would watch out for my family because once people start to know you got money then they start to harass your family.

I would want to be caught up in a struggle, meaning I would also give money to the schools to buy computers and to get their school remodeled so they can have a very nice school and I would put money into their sports teams and their school dances so they can have a good DJ and nice music to listen to and have materials to decorate the gym or wherever they have the dance. I would want the sport teams to have good uniforms and all the right equipment they need to look better and also play better as a team.

Lastly, I would move out of Oakland because if people saw me pullin' up in a nice car every day then they start to plot on me and I don't want to end up six feet under with a hole in my head, so me and my family would get up and leave and never look back on the real.

-Dirty Nell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You deliver clean piece "Dirty!" You recognize that money brings lots of opportunities to do nice things for yourself and others, but that it also brings on jealousy from the people around you - which is a threat. Why is there never enough to go around? What's this jealousy really all about?

You think you're hard
'cause you got a pistol.

That Four Letter Word

Love is a strong word. Love is passion. Love is a four letter word

If you love somebody and you said it you got to mean it, because if you don't mean it you will hurt your lover. And every time you tell her you love her, she ain't going to believe because you didn't mean it the first time. So when you said you love somebody or you said you love your girl, meeting with some passion because you an have a positive relationship.

Because if you don't have one she is going to remember what you said to her and what you said to her was that four letter word and she going to play with your head and say she love you. but she just doing what you did to her.

Trust me, because I know. I did that before and that was wrong, because I hurt her feelings and I started to care about her feelings, so she started playing with my feelings and I now I know how she felt because she did it to me, that's why love mans something.

So like I said before, when you said you love your girl meeting with some passion and some feeling. So you can have a good relationship. Peace out, this yo' boy Sam.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These are words to live by. We're sorry you had to learn the lesson so painfully, but now that you know it, you've also passed it on to the rest of us so we won't have an excuse for forgetting it. And next time you'll keep your girl.

I would watch out for my family because
once people start to know you got money
then they start to harass your family.

Message To My People

This is my message to my people:

Man we need to stop killin' each other
every time I turn around

they keep telling us about somebody that got shot
in Oakland.

We need to stop all this.

I'm not tryin' to say
go to school and get straight A's and be white washed.
But man do something,

get a hustle,
stop killin' each other.

Man it ain't worth it
killin' people that's the same race as you.
It ain't cool.

You think you're hard 'cause you got a pistol.
You're a sucka if you always gotta kill somebody
if they just want to fight.

You put the gun down and square up with somebody
don't be no poodle.

That's all I got for y'all.

I hope this little bit of my piece can change someone's life
or something in your life.

-Dirty Nell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why is it that someone who does good in school is considered white washed? Why is that? Why do we hold each other back from achieving success in the legit world? Why do you have to get a hustle to be respected?

Until Then

may this reach your soul
past your heart let's hold
you're my heart of gold
my life of diamonds
my love of kindness
when we go so far
you're my rain of stars
my sunrise
my dreams are in your eyes
take me there where by your living
you let light shine
in broken stares in loving giving
in your eyes
i know it's there
i love you from the soul
past the heart
may this reach your soul
while my eyes cry darkness dark

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Light and dark, stars punctuate the night until both broken light and darkness disappear by the light of the burning furnace of the sun, as soul to soul lovers meet and generate such nuclear heat as makes the world but a crust of bread, a toasted memory on which jam is spread. Freedom is the sun and love is free to everyone who can see beyond night into the sunlit display of living love in the light of day.

One More Chance With You

one more chance
if stars can sparkle mama you can shine
i remember you listening to mary j (my life)
on days you remain strong
can't even think of a day you did something wrong
i know you were raised to ride alone
for yours no man in both of our corners
it was days you cried long
but it's years you smile forever
mama you make a broken rose better
standing strong when in the pain
standing alone in the rain
mama you a golden angel from above
there's no other choices but to love
mama i love you
everything you've done was so new
a lil' school too but i was still new
and on this day the skies will stand so blue
mama if this system could just let me have one more
chance with you
happy birthday mama
from your last son: rodric lee'outa detoun kali stanly

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To give your mother loving birthday wishes and wish you could again be free, displays a lovely impulse. But why don't you write about the series of mistakes that led to this unhappy result — you locked up in here while your mother goes on with you nowhere near. We understand the loneliness, the pain, and even the wish to have a chance to do it right again. But you need to do some confessional analysis, so you can break out of this coming-back-to-lock-up behavioral paralysis. Why don't you write about what went, and what it would take for you to turn your life around — not generalities of good intentions, but a good hard look at what you keep neglecting to deal with. What is it? How you gonna change it if you won't admit it?

i don't eat breakfast now i
drink my tears for lunch

'Till We Reach The Sky

the sun, moon, stars, live with the sky
generations together, alone, i wonder why
the ocean sparkles beautiful in sunlight
it's an image deep inside lives a life's height
the land that starts alone
someday will end alone
bitter trees, beauty of a garden
the human remains as souls harden
eyes soft, deep like the ocean
the mind together, alone
the heart starts alone
the thoughts bitter, the life's beauty
the dreams live with the sky
death together, alone, i wonder why
we're trapped on earth
death, life and birth
third, second and first
best and worst
livin' off thirst
first birth, then livin' we die
can we dream together, alone
till we all reach the sky

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a wonderful line: "can we dream together, alone" — the question crowns the poem as if it dreamed up a heaven in the sky wherein our imaginations are free to roam. Yes, life is mixed with birth and death. What is there that does not die below the sky's eternal constellations? Of course, the scientists say even the stars in heaven face cancellation in time. The Hindus say, each cosmos is but the opening and closing of the eye of Vishnu. Count how often you blink in a day, and that's how many universes come and go in his day. Oh yes, we can dream — but can we bring justice together with what see in the heart's deepest interiority, love and mercy, compassion and peace; together, alone, make war cease except against spiritual enemies like needless suffering of poverty and disease.

in your eyes

i know it's there

i love you from the soul

In The Time

in the time someone there had taken my place
while i sat here writing poems about her, drawing her face
another dude out there was pulling her in an embrace
in the time she couldn't wait
still would i here insert her name
yeah there's a place where you learn from your mistakes
it's in wrong ways but for now it's okay
in the time she'll write promising me she'll stay
saying she'll write me everyday
i only got one letter from her out of the time i'd pray
one time outta three months
i don't eat breakfast now i drink my tears for lunch
in the time i'll see forward to move on
she's outta my life, history, she's gone
now i'm so sick of love songs
in the time mama said i'll find someone better
but in the time i'll always wait for — forever

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A heart that once took love for granted, incarcerated finds love lost less than even-handed. Having surrendered freedom to the system, for many love becomes something that goes missing. But when another takes your place out there in the free world, it becomes impossible to continue those happy ever-aftering fantasies of your girl. Mama is right again, but make living your life right where you begin.

I started to not give a damn about everything and I even didn't give a damn if I lost my life for the homies.

Cuando Salga De Aqui

Lo primero que voy a hacer es darle las gracias a Dios por ayudarme a salir de aqui y por regresar a mi familia que tanto extraño. Despues voy a ir a la escuela y terminar high school e ir a college para llegar a ser alguien en esta vida.

From The Beat: Esperamos que así sea. Hemos escuchado muchas gente que escriben casi lo mismo que tú escribistes hoy. Algunos han cumplido sus palabras, otros no. ¿De cual grupo seras? Cumpliras o regresaras? Esta respuesta solo tú la puedes dar.

When I Get Out Of Here

The first thing I am going to do is give thanks to God for helping me get out of here and for allowing me to return to my family who I miss so much. Then, I'm going to go to school and finish high school and go to college so I can become someone in this life.

-Jorge B1

From The Beat: We hope that this happens to be the case. We've heard many people that have written almost the same thing that you written today. Some have kept their word and others haven't. Which group will you belong to? Will you stay true to your word or will you come back? Only you can provide the answer to this question.

Cuando Empece A Usar Drogas

Mi vida cambio cuando yo empece a usar drogas. Yo senti que cambio mi vida porque empece a ponerme muy pendejo mas de lo que yo estaba. También empece a usar mucho mas dinero. Empece a vale madre todo y hasta me valia madre perder mi vida por los homies. También me valia gastar todo mi dinero con las viejas y homies.

From The Beat: Se supone que la vida cambia cuando uno usa drogas. Ahora tienes que darte cuenta que esta vida nunca te llebara a nada bueno mas que perder tu propia vida, lo más valoroso que tienes. ¿Sinceramente estas dispuesto a perder tu vida por algo que es insignificante?

When I Started To Use Drugs

My life changed when I started to use drugs. I felt like it changed my life because I started to be even more stupid than what I already was. I also began to use much more money. I started to not give a damn about everything and I even didn't give a damn if I lost my life for the homies. I also didn't care if I spent all my money with the females and homies.

-Gersain, Marin

From The Beat: We suppose that one's life changes when you start using drugs. Now you have to realize that this life will never lead you to anything good except losing your own life, which is the most valuable you have. Honestly, are you willing and ready to lose your life for something that is insignificant?

Mi Vida Cambio Cuando

Mi vida va a cambiar cuando deje de hacer tonterías como por ejemplo dejar de andar en pandilla y no andar en la calle vendiendo drogas.

Cuando salga de aqui no voy a volver porque yo sé que este no es un lugar donde nosotros debemos estar. Ahora tenemos que pensar en no volver a lo mismo.

Cuando salga de aqui no voy a volver a lo mismo. Voy a tratar de cambiar mi vida porque eso seria lo más importante para mi y mi familia.

Lo que más extraño son mis seres queridos, mi radio, mi telefono, pero más a mi familia. Un Saludos a todos.

From The Beat: ¿Sabes lo que necesitas para cambiar, que más esperas? Una vez que dejes esa pandilla y vender droga tu vida va a dar una gran vuelta para mejor. ¿Si has pensado en no volver ahí, que tienes pensado hacer para evitar los problemas? ¿Como le haras? ¿En que ocuparas tu tiempo?

My Life Changed When....

My life is going to change when I stop doing dumb things like for example I stop being in a gang and not be out on the streets selling drugs.

When I get out of here, I'm not going to come back because I know that this is not a place where we should be. Now we have to think about not going back to the same old things.

When I get out of here, I'm not going to go back to the same old things. I'm going to try to change my life because that would be the most important thing for me and for my family.

What I miss the most is my loved ones, my radio, my telephone, but more so my family. A shout-out goes out to all.

-Elvin, B1

From The Beat: You know what you need in order to change; what else are you waiting for? Once you stop being in that gang and selling drugs, your life is going to make a huge turn for the better. If you've thought about not coming back to this place, what do you have planned on doing in order to avoid problems? How will you do it? What will you occupy your time with?

La Entrevista

Beat: Cuanto tiempo has estado aqui?

Catracho: Un mes y unos días

B: ¿Como te sientes al estar aqui?

C: Hay días buenos y malos.

B: Donde esta tu familia?

C: En Honduras

B: ¿Como llegaste a este pais?

C: Llegue aqui por tren y tube miedo en caerme y perder una pierna.

B: ¿Vistes algo malo que ocurrio cuando venias en camino?

C: Vi que cayo alguien del tren, pero cayo en un árbol y se quedo. Solo se raspo una parte de su cuerpo.

B: ¿Como te agarraron?

C: Me agarraron vendiendo drogas.

B: ¿Donde vives?

C: Vivo con unos amigos.

B: Has buscado ayuda para que te ayuden, en la iglesia?

C: No.

B: Deberías porque en la iglesias hay gente con grandes corazones.

From The Beat: Esperamos que lo tuyo se soluciones y que aprendas mucho de esta experiencia. Vender droga es muy malo en todo el sentido de la palabra. Hay otras forma como superar sin lastimar a los demás.

The Interview

Beat: How long have you been in here?

Catracho: A months and a couple of days.

B: How do you feel being in here?

C: There are good days and there are bad days.

B: Where is your family?

C: In Honduras.

B: How did you come to this country?

C: I came over here by train and I was scared that I might fall and lose a leg.

B: Did you see anything bad happen on your way over here?

C: I saw someone fall off the train, but he fell into a tree and he stayed behind. He only scratched up a side of his body.

B: How did they arrest you?

C: They caught me selling drugs.

B: Where do you live?

C: I live with a couple of friends.

B: Have you sought any kind of help like going to church?

C: No.

B: You should because at the church there are many people with big hearts.

-Jose, B1

From The Beat: We hope that your situation is resolved and we hope you've learned a lot from this experience. Selling drugs is something very bad to do in every sense of the word. There are other ways to come up without having to hurt others.

What I miss the most is my loved ones, my radio, my telephone, but more so my family.

Cuando Salga

Cuando salga de aquí, lo primero que voy a hacer es abrazar a mi familia. Después me voy a dedicar a mi escuela, y después de la escuela a mi práctica de soccer.

También cuando sea grande quiero ser un deportista profesional. Eso es lo que quiero ser cuando sea grande. También quiero dedicarme a pasar más tiempo con mi familia. Otra cosa también les quiero hablar a todos mis amigos y a mi novia.

From The Beat: Tienes lindas metas que cumplir en esta vida. Nos agrada mucho escuchar una lectura muy positiva. Sabes muy bien que para realizar todo estos sueños, vas a tener que dejar a un lado un numero de cosas que te meten en problemas. ¿Estas dispuesto a hacer esto?

When I Get Out

When I get out of here, the first thing that I am going to do is hug my family. Then, I am going to dedicate myself to my school and then after school, I'm going to dedicate myself to practicing soccer.

Also when I get older, I want to be a professional sports player. That's what I want to be when I get older. I also want to dedicate more of my time to spending it with my family. Another thing that I want to do, too, I want to talk to all my friends and my girlfriend.

-Arnulfo B1, SF/YGC
From The Beat: You have a lot of wonderful goals to fulfill in this life. We very much appreciate reading such a positive piece. You know very well that in order to realize all these dreams, you're going to have to put to the side a number of things that get you in problems. Are you ready and willing to do this?



Mi Vida Cambio

Mi vida cambio cuando vino un hermano de la iglesia y me hablo cosas de Dios. Después de esto, yo empecé a visitar las iglesias. Gracias a los hermanos de la iglesia y a Dios cambie. ¡Gracias!

From The Beat: Esperamos que la palabra de Dios te ayude muchísimo en tu cambio y que nunca más vuelvas a estos caminos.

My Life Changed

My life changed when a brother from church came and he spoke to me about God. After this, I started to visit churches. Thanks to the brothers from the church and God, I changed. Thanks.

-Eric, Marin
From The Beat: We hope that the word of God helps you out a lot in your change and that you never go back down those old roads.

I started to visit
churches. Thanks to the
brothers from the church
and God, I changed.
Thanks.

Mi Vida Ha Sido Una Pelicula

Mi vida ha estado en el cine porque mi vida es igual que a la película de Daddy Yankee. Si la han visto. Esa película se trata de un callejero y un roba carros y esteros. Así ha sido mi vida, un vende drogas, un roba radios de carros y carros. En la película a Daddy lo arresto por vendedor de drogas y se lo llevan a la juvenil de su condado. Eso fue lo que me paso. Un saludo.

From The Beat: ¿Cual es la lección que esa película enseña? ¿Que aprendistes de esa película? ¿Hay cambio en esa película? ¿Habrá cambio en tu vida? ¿Como termina la película y como terminara tu vida?

My Life Has Been A Movie

My life has been in a movie because my life is just like Daddy Yankee's movie. Yes y'all have seen it. That movie is about a street-roamer that robs cars and stereos. That's how my life has been: A life of selling drugs, stealing car radios, and cars. In the movie, Daddy got arrested for selling drugs and they take him to his county's Juvenile. That is what happened to me. A shout-out goes out to the people.

-Oscar B2, SF/YGC
From The Beat: What is the lesson that that movie shows? What did you learn from that movie? Is there any sort of change in that movie? Will there be a change in your life? How does the movie end and how will your life end?

Por Usar Drogas

Mi vida cambio cuando empecé a usar drogas y a tomar alcohol. También cambio cuando empecé a salir con los amigos que me daban drogas. Usabamos de todo y en la calle. También cambio cuando me trajo la policía aquí.

From The Beat: Esperamos que busques la manera como cambiar a normalidad porque vivir una vida de esta manera es pura destruccion y sufrimiento.

For Using Drugs

My life changed when I started to use drugs and drinking alcohol. It also changed when I started to go out with the friends who gave me drugs. We would use a little bit of everything and be out on the streets. It also changed when the police brought me in here.

-Federico, Marin
From The Beat: We hope that you look for the way so you can change your life to a normal one because to live life this way is nothing but pure self-destruction and pain.

Also when I get older, I want to be a
professional sports player. That's what I
want to be when I get older.

School, Job, and Trouble-Free Me

Hey Beat, how are you doing? Well, I've been doing good. I'm about to get out in three weeks, and I'm about to go back to school, and get a job, and stay out of trouble!

One day I'm going to get out of probation and be legit and have better friends that wont get me in trouble.

-Lil' Borieva

From The Beat: At first it sounds all good, like you're getting released to go live the way you should. Then you say you'll be legit one day, as in some day, meaning, later in life. Why?

I Am Who I Am

I am who I am if you don't like me, o-well, you don't have to like me.

- Numb

From The Beat: Don't we all wish that we really didn't care what people think!

Dear Life

I am having a hard time in juvenile hall. I have a wife and kids that I'm thinking about every day and every night. I stress daily, because I'm in a bear cave. I have to go to court and make sure the judge doesn't try to mess me in no way. I hope that I get out of here soon, because I'm missing my family.

-Nathaniel

From The Beat: It sounds like you have your head on straight, working at Pack and Save, and not staying out late but getting home to your little family that needs its daddy. What happened?

Bull!

Damn man! My court day was last Wednesday and I got released on EM. But then I gotta stay in here for an extra week because it took one week to take out the caller ID man!

-Linh

From The Beat: The good news is, you're getting released. Don't come back Linh!

Just Met You

What's up Beat this is your boy Lil' Joker. I want to tell you about a homeboy that I met up in here his name is Lil' Bizzy. He's hella cool even though we talk shhh about each other, it feels like he's my cousin and he's a homeboy just like me. I got his back and he got my back. I only knew him for a month up in here but when we get out we are gonna kick it and smoke and drink and kick it when he get out.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: We're glad you've made friends inside the hall, but we hope you two remember when you're hanging out on the outs where you met, and be careful not to return! We have a lousy feeling you both will be back if your life is all about kicking back, smoking and drinking.

Forget Level Three

Forget Level Three

This shhh just ain't me

I'm tired of changing my own personality

I'm not uplifting or positive

I'm only destructive and negative

Forget Level Three

That shhh just ain't me

I'm not gonna be who you want me to be

'Cause I can only be the best me, that I can be

I'm not changing me for your own pleasure

'Cause my mama, like me

And I'll always be her treasure

Forget Level Three

I can only be

And if you don't like it

It's not my problem.

-Ri-Ri

From The Beat: Ri-Ri, we admire your passionate response. But, you should really focus on what's best for you rather than just going against authority. You are a fighter. You want the best life that you can live, you want your life to be meaningful. If you feel like you are destructive and negative, change that. You're only going to end up hurting yourself. Change for YOU, not for THEM. It is your problem. You can do, be smart.

Words to the Wise

1. Speak the way you feel, using the words in a direct way, not using it to gossip about others. Speak with integrity.

2. If you are in pain and need help But have too much pride to ask for it Don't be sad if no one gives a shhh about you!

-Adrian

From The Beat: Thanks for these words to the wise, we will take them to heart. When have they proven useful to you in your life?

A Letter To My Son And Daughter

I don't want my son our daughter to grow up like me 'cause my son and daughter is going to be in school. They ain't going be out there on the streets of Oakland and that's real.

Just like my cousin JT said, it ain't nothing but killing and robbing in the town and I don't want my kids or my girl by that street life. It ain't nothing out there for kids.

What you going to get out of smoking weed, drinking, poppin' E pills, shotguns. I mean ninja be for real. I been there and done it. I mean ninja I'm from the hood too, so it ain't shhh that you ninjas can tell me that my dad or my mom told me. That's real.

Just like my cousin said we're going to get the hell out of Oakland. I hope you're reading this. and know we ain't smokin' shhh. It ain't about it, it's changing our life and you ninjas ain't got to like it but you ninjas ain't going to stop us and that's on the real. One love to my cousin JT. One love fo' life.

-G-Money

From The Beat: Good for you, for seeing the way out. Tell us what it's going to be like not smoking, drinking, etc. Are you going to miss it? How will you resist temptation? You and JT will have each other, which is lucky. We hope you hang together and stick to your goals and dreams free of the system. Then you can come back to The Beat and tell all the little ones just how possible it is. We're pulling for you!

The Life

pimps, playas, hustlas

a' rippis, i'll never trust ya

can't kick it wit' a suckas

gotta watch out

'cause foo's tryin' to bust at ya

slippin' in and out of sin

o g's and youngstas in the pen

people losin' but tryin' to win

homies passed

like a blink of an eye quick like that

his enemies shot him in the back

hittin' up the homie for a dub sack

kickin' it on the block tryin' to stack

runnin' from cops

even when they tell you to stop

you hit fences then you drop

smokin' too much weed

sippin' on a hennsey bottle to get keyed

scraper slappin' and ya hear forty-five's clappin'

under buckets be smashin'

ridin' in a stolo on a high speed with the rolos

smashin' back to the spot when no ones there and i was

solo

but i'm back in max for a fact before you know though

-H-Fella

From The Beat: You offer a blueprint on how to end up in a cage or an early grave. But we wonder if you've learned the necessary lesson, 'cause you sound like you're still a slave to that street-life mission, almost like you're celebratin' what has you incarcerated. Don't fall in love with your rep', 'cause things can get still worse yet, and you deserve better than what livin' "the life" will get. Whatever you did in the past, the rest of your life is coming on fast.

Missing You

I miss your smile the way you look at me and how you always try to help me and I will miss you physically and mentally you will always be on my mind. I will miss the way you talk to me and say you love me.

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: Lil' Miami, we are glad that you decided to write in the Beat this week. We hope that this reaches the person that you are thinking about.

Back In The Hall

What it do this yo' boy Baby Lou, back in the Hall, for all that know me, know yo' boy just got out of Camp, but I am back. But it's nothing.

I just went to court today 5/16/06 all I got to do is a few plus months and I am out for good. To all keep yo' head up, this yo' boy Baby Lou.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: Baby Lou, what do you mean it's nothing? Your lifestyle is bringing you back and forth to the Hall. What happens when you are old enough to get sent to the pen? Is this how you want to live your life? Think about it - if you don't change something, then you'll continue to get nothing.

people losin' but tryin' to win
homies passed
like a blink of an eye quick like that

What It Do?

What's up Beat and Beat readers. This Lil' Young up in this unit.

They over here talkin 'bout I need to go to this other unit 'cause I'm too mature, but they ain't doin' it, so whatever.

I also wanna say what's up, keep yo' head up stand yo' ground and I'll see you on the outs. Stay up handle yours alright I'm out.

-Lil' Young

From The Beat: Lil' Young, will you life continue to be in and out of institutions? Think about your life and where it's going. Keep your head

My Rap

My name is Britoria
And it's not what it seems
Comin' from Oakland
Rockin Baby Phat jeans
Walk up in the party
Make all the boys lean back
Checking out my million dolla smile
Dealin' with me
This girl will go wild
I know I am bootsy...
Ha ha ha ha ha!

-Britoria

From The Beat: Keep laughing, silly.

Money Brings Happiness

If I didn't have to worry about money I honestly don't know what I would do. I would probably focus a lot more on school and kickin' it with the homies. I would definitely help my mom around the house a lot more and other stuff she needed.

Money stays on my mind -- it brings happiness, when you have money you get what you want when you ain't got money and you want somethin' bad.

I do what I gotta do what I gotta do to get what I wanna get.

-Kyle

From The Beat: Do you think it's possible to be addicted to money? Like it sounds like you need it so bad that you'll risk your freedom, being true to your mom, even your life.... But the thing is, that kind of need, an addict's need, can never be satisfied. Food, clothes, shelter - those are the needs, everything else is just about feeling empty inside. What else could you fill that emptiness with, and where does it come from?

Money

If I didn't have to worry about money and I had lots of money I would buy hella clothes and shoes.

I would have a big house with a football field in the backyard. I would do whatever I want and buy what ever I want.

I would give hella money to East Palo Alto and build it up also I would give hella money to the charities all around the world. I would also donate money to the people of Africa.

-Kid Money

From The Beat: You've got a generous heart, and you see that poverty causes people such unhappiness. But you got us thinking, does money cause unhappiness too? It can sometimes, we've seen. Have you seen this?

Moneyless

If people didn't have to worry about money maybe lots of people would do more things for example if you poor you wouldn't want to go to the mall without money, because maybe people don't want to see other people buy stuff. The thought of having to pay makes people not want to go places.

-Jabrie

From The Beat: Have you ever been that person? The one at the mall with no money, watching other people buy whatever they want? If yes, how did it feel?

Why I Do What I Do

What's up Beat, this is Lil' Joker. I gang bang because I grew up in south Hayward with gangstas and I got hooked into it. I've been gang bangin' since I was 11 years old and I'm still a bangin'. I can't stop bangin'. I can't stop bangin' maybe because I don't want to. My hood don't play. We hate those that don't like us. I've lived in south Hayward since I was 5 years old. I keep it live for my hood. Keep strong and be careful out there. Be cool and remember your boy, Lil' Joker.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: Some people say that gang bangin' is an addiction. So we aren't gonna hate on you for being honest about what feels good to you - but we want to ask you a question. Tell us "why" you don't want to leave. Describe for us what it is, because we know it's not as simple as just hating others. We truly hope you wake up before this incarceration ride gets worse.

Me And My Hood

Growin' up in the hood I thought it was all good, but hangin' with the wrong crowd I got misunderstood. So now I'm posted in the hall dis' time that I shouldn't, when I could be with my boo getting it and lookin' but you got to watch close 'cause them boys be jukin', ha!

What it do Beat and Beat readers? It's the prince Lil'Solid here to give you'll all taste of what I be doin' on the outs. But anyways I talked to my PO today and he told me I get out this week so that was good news to hear.

My hood is what made at least half of what I be today good and bad sides of me. It taught me how the streets could know. It teaches you street game, some school knowledge and most importantly family game 'cause you can't go around and call everybody family, and how to never forget who your real family is and never take what you got for granted. I learned that in here but started to notice it out there. Last but not least what type of family and mother/ father your kid's gonna have.

So now that I'm getting this last chance I'm gonna handle my business wit' my newborn baby and be out for my kid and my 16th b-day so to all you'll in here do what you got to do and stay solid, yamtalkinbout.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: What do you mean by "handle your business"? We could guess, but we want the straight story from you about what it is you need and want to do to stay out, with your family and with you freedom.

MOM (Mean Ol' Moms)

My mom is African American.

She is a bad person.

She can be cool at times and at times she can be the meanest person on earth.

There's not really much to say about my mom.

-Kid Money

From The Beat: Is your mom really a bad person? Tell us what makes her a bad person. Or is she just mean to you sometimes because she's unhappy, or because you're spending too much time on the unsafe streets? We're just guessing...so tell The Beat more about your mom!

Listen To My Unheard Message

I wouldn't have a speech because most people in my hood wouldn't listen anyway. I would just tell them that they need to stop killing off our own turf.

-Kid Money

From The Beat: Why won't people listen? What's going on in your hood that folks won't listen to a wise man? Tell us more! Because your message is right on.

Message For The Few Caught Up

What up people this is your boy C-Baby hollerin' at you from the town hall. I been up in here for a few months and two weeks and this shhh is not cool and my message is about everybody can't be a thug. That's how people start getting cooked because they don't got what the next man got so they hate that.

-C-Baby

From The Beat: If not just anyone can be a thug, why is everybody trying so hard to be one and ending up in the hall? What is this disease, this thug fascinating? Teach us why

Dear Brother

I really don't know what to say because I am so disappointed in you. I don't even know you really. I am growing up and it's just anger!

Don't talk to me when you see me, act like you don't know me. I still love you.

-Britoria

From The Beat: Sometimes people hurt us so badly that we can't stand to be around them. Although you still love your brother, some time apart may heal your heart. Hopefully one day the two of you can reconcile your relationship. Peace.

Flow

I go left, I go right, there is trouble. But if I keep straight I don't know where I will go, I don't know.

-Lewis

From The Beat: This sounds like the beginning of a powerful rap flow, so keep going!

My Momma's Day

I've been in here since January 30, 2006. That's a long four months. I just want to say Happy Mothers Day. I love my family and Happy Mothers Day to everybody that has kids.

-Rosevelt

From The Beat: Four months is a long time! What have you learned, good or bad, during your four months in the hall?

Females

Females in some sort really irritate me, it's a shame that we can't sit down at the table and solve it like two mature women, but I've taken all I could in, now, talking is really not an option.

I am not gone boast about what I can do and how I am gon' do it because words can mean a variety of things, but then again hypothetically speaking it does damage, and that's a under statement.

-Britoria

From The Beat: Britoria, it's clear that you've lost your patience with others and how they deal with their problems, but you can't lower yourself down to there level. If you feel like the best way to resolve problems is to talk it out, always try that way first. Before you decide what action to take, think about the consequences you will suffer. Be selfish. Think about, what is going to be best for YOU, rather than focusing on other's punishments. Learn how to not allow yourself to get irritated and the problem will be resolved from the start.

Out Tomorrow

What's up with it Beat? I hope you all having a good day because I'm not. We on lockdown right now, but it's coo' 'cause I'm leaving tomorrow so I'm not even tripping. Yo Boy,

-Baby Wezzy

From The Beat: Good luck with everything. Write to the BWO and let us know how you're doing!

How I Really Feel

I want you to know how I really feel,
'Cause it hurts when you are not here
I'm angry I'm mad and I'm cold
It feels as if my soul got sold
It a blessing that you hear with me
But it's not 'cause I got to write secretly
I want to express my feelings to you on paper
But now not later
It hurts me to sit in this room
Alone knowing
I got somebody two hallways up
In his own room
I hate that we got in trouble
But us been here together
Increases are love double to double.
Now I can truly say we're Bonnie and Clyde
'Cause I will stand by yo' side
To ride or die.

-A-Moss

From The Beat: Please! We hate this kind of talk. Bonnie and Clyde is not as romantic as you may think. You are a teen. You haven't lived half of your life. You've only made mistakes, which brought you to this place of hopelessness. Forget all this romanticized version of life and relationships and start thinking realistically. If you choose to settle yourself and accept your situation, then you are doomed to not go anywhere. If you picture a life in the future, then you will have one. Ride or die may be what you are prepared to do, but think about where that ride will take you.

Lightweight

Today I been thinking of how I changed lightweight. I care more about things and I'm still the same hyphy ninja.

I see all my family greeting me plus passin' the purp and the drank. It's hot where I'm from, but I'm going to stay cool, best believe. I got responsibility to take care of when I go home. If I'm correct I should be out in ten days, and I ain't going to miss it here.

I got respect for a few of the staff, and if big Watts in Max reading this, this ya nephew in the other unit saying see you on the outs.

-Kip Boy

From The Beat: We wish you all the best of luck on your changes, but we think you have heavyweight potential to switch your life up, stay cool no matter how hot it gets, and take care of your responsibilities. Keep us posted, best of luck.

I Had A Friend

I had a friend that was my best friend and we played ball every day. After the last game he past away because he was in a gang and that's all I got to say. Rest in peace to my best friend.

-Dominic

From The Beat: Dominic, we are sorry to hear about your friend. Sometimes in life we make decisions that have horrible consequences. Hopefully you learn from his life. May he Rest In Peace.

A Message To My Neighborhood

If I had to send a message to my hood I would tell all the homies to be careful and make sure to watch over the street for me and don't let the boys mess with you. Also don't let nobody get you down and keep your heads up. Rest in Peace to all who have passed away.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Sorry Smokey, we had to edit your piece a little bit. You should be careful about giving advice to others about how to conduct themselves in the streets, especially since you are sitting in the Hall. Can you think of a way to live your life without running the risk of incarceration?

Lucky Break

Man I went to court today and I thought I was going to Rita. My PO was tryna do me, she said that I have three choices: Santa Rita for 90 days, camp for 6 to 9 monhts, or CYA for a few years. But when I went to court they gave me something different. 90 days in tha hall.

I ain't trippin' off 90 days in the hall. But I'm just gon' do this time and do the right thing, I'm a get a job and pay my restitution so I can get off probation. I get out July 31st. I can't wait until that day.

-Lb

From The Beat: Heh, well you know what we're going to say: With that amount of time, you could write a clean life story for The Beat.

Summer of 2005

I went dumb in '05. I was on the run but I couldn't miss one mo' summer, so what happened was first of all I ran from ma bootsie ass group home in San Jose, called EE's. When I finally touch down in Oakland, I copped a quarter of that powder and got on one. After that I go' kick it with my pearl and we do what we do, and after that I hit up my ninja from Richmond and he tell me he 'bout to smash up to the Summer Jam! So I'm like what's up, we on one, and he like get ready so I got ready - and I go to tha' ninja's house and I'm thinkin'...

-Guess Who?

From The Beat: To be continued???? We would have loved to hear the rest of this story, and find out about the summer jam, especially because from you we're so used to great poetry from you, it's nice to see you mixing it up and being so versatile. A person of many talents. As for running away from your group home, what were you thinking? Is that how you ended up back in here?

Free Twon and Tony

What's up. This ya boy Twon. They finally caught me. Man, I'm up in here, missing everything! But they can't keep a real ninja like me for too long. They got me locked up..

-Antwon

From The Beat: You need to look within if you really want true freedom to begin. 'Cause they can put so-called "real ninjas" away for life. No one can snitch if you just start doing right. You feel? That's what we call keeping it real!

My Best Summer - Back when Da'von Was Alive

My best summer was two years ago wen I was in da hood every day doin' my thang, hangin' wit' my ninjas. My ninja Da'von was alive that year. He had just got out of jail, and before he was killed he would have da time of his life, get his money and getting' wet by damn near everything.

I miss my ninja. That summer it was always me Laron, Mula and Purp. We was havin' fun every day just bein' us, bein' in the hood, smashin' on ninjas. We put that shhh on the map. Right now all my ninjas locked up but when we all be out in the summer together that will be my best summer, but I don't plan on bein' in here to tell y'all about where I'm goin'.

-Mar Mar

From The Beat: Has it ever occurred to you, Mar-Mar, that there are OTHER WAYS OF GETTING ON THE MAP besides smashing? You want recognition, you want fame, you want respect? Earn it. Be the first kid out of your crew to go to college, to vote in a local election (that's right - vote. If you really want to represent your hood, that's a good place to start), to quit the game, to get a legit paycheck, to walk past the cops without being hassled. We say this from respect - we see you each week, we see what you could be, and how good you could be... why not try it?

My Mama

My mama was my world and my knight in shining armor

But as I grow older we grow apart

I am starting to hate her

But a good friend of mine, Ms. Wadud just lost her mother

And it's making me appreciate mine more

I'm sorry you lost your mother you make me appreciate mine more.

-Ri-Ri

From The Beat: Ri-Ri, sometimes it's really hard to appreciate what we've got before it's too late. Although you have some negative feelings towards your mother, focus on the good stuff and your life will be much sweeter. Start talking to your mom. Try to have sit down conversations with her and be honest with her. RIP to Ms. Wadud's mother too.

I'm Blessed

If you knew me, you know I been shot and where.

If you knew me you know this story.

I was walking in Richmond one night and a black Saturn came around this corna and people hung out that window bussin' guns.

I pushed my brotha on that grown

I pulled out my gun and started to bust back. When I got hit by a .38 bullet, I fell and my brotha grabbed the gun

and kept shootin' until they hit the corna and left. You can tell I'm OK 'cause I'm here right now!

I'm blessed.

-Kip Boy

From The Beat: You're blessed, but that kind of a blessing don't come twice. What are you going to do to show that you understand the meaning (and responsibility) that comes with that kind of a blessing?

My Football Summer

The best summer I ever had was 2001. it was the best summer, because I was doing good in school and I wasn't getting into any trouble. I also was in sports. The sport was football. In the summer I had a good group of kids to hang out with.

We weren't getting into any trouble and we traveled places. My friends and I always had something to do whether it was working out at the gym or playing tag. The summer was very fun to me because I was doing good in school. I was actually trying to do my work and trying to get along with everybody. Now I can't do anything. I can't hang out with my old friends and I can't go to regular school and I can't play sports. I can't do those things anymore because I get in a lot of trouble.

If I can go back in time I would start over and try to do the stuff that I used to do, I miss that summer so much. That is crazy, that's how much I like that summer.

-Elton

From The Beat: You can't go back in time, but you can go back to a life of feeling good about yourself and having fun. Wherever you go, whatever school you get sent to, find the coach. If you get a good feeling about him, tell him about your athletics background, and ask him to get you back involved. If he says your grades are too low, then ask him to help you get a tutor. If they don't have a tutor for you, contact us! Good luck, let us know what happens.

My Grandfather

When I was little my granddaddy used to make me and my sisters listen to the blues. We listened to it all the time, we would dance together and all that, he always used to put on BB King and all that.

RIP Larry Goitre, and we all miss him and thinking about him all the time.

-Lil' Man Man

From The Beat: Thank you for this tribute to your Grandfather. And for your details about his love of the blues... he sounds like a wonderful man. Do you still dig the blues?

The Difference Between Being Real And Broke

It's really not much differences to it because both roles has to do with responsibility and mannin' up for their actions in the streets feel me?

It's probably one thing different a real man might call it quits in the game for benefits feel me? But a real ninja gon' stay solid and remain in the game and benefit from that. Yeah that's my answer.

-DJ

From The Beat: So what they have in common is that they both have integrity and commitment. But if real man is someone who, for example takes care of his children, and he decides to be a "real ninja" but then gets caught up for it, didn't he just choose being a real ninja over being a real man? Can a person be both at the same time? And which one do you want to be?

My Life

at night i can't sleep
hoping god is on midway
look up in the sky
i'm searchin' for them better days
swear my life is misery
grindin' hard tryin'
to make g's
so i'm up late night
lookin' in the mirror
at my reflection
like my life is wrong
and am i wrong
for trying to grind
through the hard times
trying to get scrill
trying to make a mill'
and real ninjas
know how i feel

-Realest

From The Beat: If you stay on the grind you will find yourself doing more time in here than you spend on the grind out there — and you know you're making no dough in here. Don't let the hard times bend your mind into volunteering to do more time. No more misery when you decide the grind is just history. Get your GED and j-o-b and stay free!

Three Weeks Left

Dear Beat, it's Lil' Neph once again. Well, I only got three weeks left in here, and I can't wait to go home! I missed hellu much. My dad's b-day and also high school graduation!

This time in here I cannot get back. I can't wait until I'm with my family. This time that I've wasted in here has not been much of a loss for me though, because I feel if I were out there I'd be getting into something far worse then what I'm in right now!

I have set goals for myself, so when I get out, I won't be cATTin' off, saying I'm going to do something that I know I'm not. I need to make my family proud of me! It's only a matter of time before my time here is up. So I send my love and respect to all those locked up, everywhere.

-Lil' Neph

From The Beat: We've watched you mature this time round in the Hall, to the point where we share your hope that you're about to follow through on a plan to make your family proud of you. There's no point in making grand promises you don't intend to keep, but make sure you do keep your focus on the goals you have set yourself after your release. If you slip up and lose faith in yourself, just get back on the right track and fake it till you make it — act on faith and soon your faith in yourself will be restored. You are capable of — and deserve — so much more!

My First TR Coming Up!

Orale, Beat! What's good? This your vato, Lil' Chuckie, writing y'all from Camp. How is all my vatos doing? Well, hope and pray y'all doing okay and pimpin' this system. Well, about my TR: Man, homies, it's been three months and I haven't been in the outs! I know to some of y'all, it's nothing, but to me, I can't wait!

I still remember when I was up in max, sometimes asking myself, "Where's my next stop — CYA, ROP, or Camp Sweeney?" I remember wishing and praying for an E.M. release, but that didn't happen even though some of my homies used to tell me, "Yeah, homie, don't trip. You're getting that E.M. release." But look, homies, I'm in Camp, waiting for the weekend for me to go home on my TR from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM — I can't wait!

The first thing I'm'a do on my TR, is hit the smoke shop. Well, you know I'm from Hayward and I gotta hit the smoke shop and get me some Newport's. Yeah, and maybe some drink, too. But that I gotta buy at Quick Stop by the skate park. I know, well, I'm 100% sure, that I'll see someone from my hood or someone from I know from Hayward while I'm out. But anyway, time is running and this Camp is calling me to eat. Well, one love to all, stay up, be safe. I'm out.

-Lil' Chuckie

From The Beat: It is like a miracle when you're up in max, stressing over a CYA trip and you get sent to Camp and get a TR (temporary release) and/or your first HV (home visit). It's not like release on EM, 'cause you're in Camp all week, but it's not much like CYA or ROP either! Enjoy your little bit of time on your TR, but remember, if you catch a dirty you'll lose that HV your probably looking forward to just as eagerly as this TR.

Cold World, Hard Words

the flow within with my soul
to have respect for the things that happen
and with a little effort in life
show many reasons for being outstanding
for most some things will never come true
and sometimes it hurts maybe
everybody else surrenders to fear
my heart is full of tears
crying about how i can't get it out
but i'm not without energy so
i spit some fast rhymes
like scrapin' pieces of words together
for myself to realize
that pieces can put together
family will be forever
first and last
we survive in the world
it's so hard.

-Brandon

From The Beat: Broken hopes and fragments of dreams can be scraped together into heaps of words making up poems that seem to make the broken mirror whole again, and we see in it ourselves surviving the hard times in poems with and without rhymes. You've got the heart to start making a new meaning to all the pain and confusion you've been feeling — the beginning of the change, the birth of the new you free from the chains that hold you in the game.

Call My Girl

If it cold outside, I go in the house and call my girl. When she get there, I make a cup of noodles and get a bottle of hot sauce. You feel me?

Then I'll get a bag of Mary Jane, so that I could get a lil' freaky wit' my girl and have a lil' fun 'cause it' cold outside. So, after I have some fun, we gon' take a shower, a hot shower. You know. So then, I gon' get dressed and put on some warm clothes so I won't get cold.

I gon' get some more food for me and my girl. I gon' go to my room and watch some TV and go to sleep and call it a day, because it's cold out.

-Stoneface

From The Beat: When the weather is physically cold and the temperature drops, staying in with hot food, warm clothes, a hot shower, etc., are all good ways to stay warm. But now when it's cold, in the sense of hard and cruel outside on the block, why don't you show the same good sense and stay inside with your girl?

What I Need

Well a person like me, if I didn't have to worry about money, I would go dumb like spendin' my money on everything I wanted and like. But what I really want is a big ass house and I need a benz and I need some more souls.

-Lil' Man Man

From The Beat: These things aren't out of reach (except we weren't sure we were reading your handwriting right. Souls? Is that what you need?) — the question is how can you get them without putting your life, your neighborhood, your family and freedom in jeopardy. You know what they say about the turtle and the hare, right? Have you ever tried the turtle approach?

When I'm Out This?

When I get out of this J-cat world I'm in, I'm'a start back on what I left behind.

While I've been in here, it's killin' me to put up with some of these suckas tryin' to act hard because the staff is here to save them after they stop talking all that shhh they do behind the door!

They just don't know how to be coo'. If you see one of these suckas later, when you see them on the out, they wanna say what's up, remember when we was in the hall? Now tell me that ain't cATTin' off?

-Kionte

From The Beat: So much of the talk in the Hall is foolish. And all that angry, "I'm going to ..." do whatever they say they're going to do to you, is nothing but their own anxiety and confusion boiling over. It is a little crazy-making to have to hear all that. But why hold a grudge when you know they're just bumping their gums. Don't even trip, 'cause it's nothing.

Still Here

What's up Beat. This your homeboy, Gorilla, from the West Bay. You feel me? Well, I'm still here in Alameda County Juvenile Hall waiting to get moved to San Mateo County Juvenile Hall.

But one thing I miss, is my familia out there, starting with my mom, and then my ruca and kid, all the homeboys and homegirls from the varrio. One thing I just hope, is to get out of this jail system and try to better myself. I'm just going to do my time like it's nada and get back to my loved ones sooner then later.

Well, to all behind the walls of Pen's, CYA's, Halls, and Camps, stay strong. One love and respect..

-Gorilla

From The Beat: Well, three weeks from completing your program and you skipped Camp. Now you're back, just about when you would have been released. We saw your mind slipping away from responsible thinking back into resentment, anger and identification with your old street ways. So now again you have to pay. We truly hope you can focus on bettering yourself by getting a legal job and staying away from the park. You feel?

The Y

When I get out of here I hope I do right so I won't have to come back to this shhh one day. I will be all grown up and if I keep coming back I might go the Y and I don't want to go to the Y or I will see you ninjas later.

-Lil' Tippy

From The Beat: We hope you don't go to the Y either. Let us know what happens, in person at our office or through the mails. Good luck.

Smoke, Drank and Homie Love

Why do I smoke weed? Because if I'm going through some hard times, like one of my friend's friends got killed, and I got mad. So me and my friend says, RIP to him and smoke some weed, and in his name pour out some drank. Or if my patna is in Camp, then I would say free him 'cause we been through thick and thin together: being broke, hustling at the gas station. That my ninja. I would die for my ninja. RIP to my fallen homies — go dumb in heaven! That's how I feel.

-Fredy

From The Beat: The love is strong, but we still don't see what that has to do with smoking weed. Pouring drink on a homie's grave is a way of showing love, grief and respect, but wouldn't it be better to save his life or your own or your friend before you or he is next? That won't happen by staying on the street grind. There's nothing wrong with going dumb, and heaven's a great place to do it — but get your life here on earth right, then go dumb without getting locked up in the system or dying young.

Pills And Grapes

What it do? I got three more months left at Camp. This weekend I'm 'bout to mess wit' some of my ninjas from I know on the out, and we gon mess around wit' a couple females we know and get drunk. We got extendo's this weekend, so I'm'a put a pill or two in my life.

My baby'mama had an abortion, so I'm kinda mad — but this weekend I think I might smoke. I need to hurry up and get released, 'cause I need to put grapes back in my life! But I'm 'bout to thug these few months out — you feel me? When I get out through, I'm'a move in wit' my baby'mama, and then we gon' try it one more time.

Anyway, don't be like me on the real, 'cause I'm a bad influence on y'all lives. Stay Strong and keep it treat.

-Bra Dummy

From The Beat: So if you really mean that others shouldn't be like you, then why do you want to advertise your bad choices in The Beat? Nah, you still think you're living life to its fullest when your popping pills, smoking purple and messing around with some girls. This does not promise much good for your baby'mama nor your child. And then you're mad because she didn't give you another child? You need to grow up fast and be a man, 'cause the way you're writing today, you're stuck in a boy's fantasy-plan. As fast as you hurry up and get free to live this way, you'll also be hurrying up to have more time to pay. What will it take to make you wake up to what's real? You're

The Same

worry, stress over yourself
females come and go
if you gon' have a main
at least stay with three others
that are replacement candidates
on the side
i try to give some advise to those
who had problems
i realize that most of us
have similar life situations
i learned from my problems
and i'm trying to let y'all know
what i learned
so y'all wont have to stress
over that noise anymore
that's where i messed up at
not listening to people who been through
what i was going through
so i'm trying to spread the positive message

-Bra Dummy

From The Beat: You can't stack female companions like you can dead presidents, 'cause if you want a relationship to be all it can be — you've got to go into it with honesty. Of course there are no guarantees, but that's the deal. Cheat on the side to hedge your bet, and the real love gets doomed to end in regret. A player will never keep true love, 'cause he plays his own heart like a trick; he thinks he's protecting himself but really he's wrecking himself.

The Stroke Of My Brush

until my words tickle your heart
steady strokes of my brush
beautiful art
oh do love paint nude
of lust
precious blooming
you trust
my hands of touch
gentle before
even gentle now
if too much
i'll brighten the shadow
farewell, i'll follow
remember until my words are swallowed
and lover's eyes confirm
maybe i should erase the braids and give you
a perm
you reject
you love what you feel
you forever seek what you see
until my words tickle deep
steady strokes of my brush
beautiful art
you trust
in the stroke of my brush

-Lil' Mainy The Prince

From The Beat: There was a time when images were thought to hold power over others' minds, and magical charms with the power to do good or do harm were fabricated in rhymes. If love can still be won by such antique manner, then from lover spurned she will return to you enamored.

My Children

If I didn't have to worry about money I would have to worry about my kids one more name Gabriele. The other one is called June. They are the only things important to me. It would be my baby Momma to but we are not together, but my mind is not on her.

My mind is on taking care of my kids and supporting them any way I can.

-Bajrami

From The Beat: We know that there is an epic story behind these few sentences, and we thank you for opening up about it last time we talked. Now we're really hoping you write about it too, because it's such a powerful story, and we would be honored to have it in The Beat.

Be Yours In The Rain

love again forever
become my dreams make them better
lips drip passion
heart drip pain
there's a touch that remain
asking
will i be yours in the rain
only sunlight is your name
short hair, thick lips, your inner-you value
outside you
touch me, bring me, baby
inside the beautiful
night, let's cuddle until lately
kisses have flavor
the touches feel so major
let's go outside, rain on me
my heart and yours, favor
let's love again forever
become my dreams make them become better
lips drip passion
hearts drip pain
there's a love that remain
asking
will i be yours in the rain.

-Lil' Mainy The Prince

From The Beat: Will you disappear in dreams of lovers' touch, when you need to get pragmatic about the realities of life and such things as bring you back to incarceration. Turn away from the face in your dreams and start dreaming of how freedom can be redeemed with acts of responsible social commitment. Don't let your broken heart and poetic vocation, distract you from the real challenge you're facing. It's not about losing her, however much that may hurt — it's about losing you; giving your freedom away like a foo'. Maybe you gave it first to her, but you gave it to the system, too, and that's even worse. Wake up, or your dreams that seem a blessing will be your curse.

His Dream You Will Read

he's born to remember
date of november
written became serendipity
crying wasn't hard to be
a sequel
dreams of being loved, history
so deep, so high, fly like a eagle
land precariously in
love with whom love him
it's self-sentimental
pumpin' fear of being without
tired of just being an individual
shattered, back together, his heart in mouth
lies of the mind
listen to his life you'll be doin' the cryin'
in the mind he's dyin'
his heart writes to live
poor, he alone, his eyes stay rich, effective
in dream he believes, then cries more, the writer
bleeds
go deep too deep where they can't swim in the sea
let 'em see, you proved yourself, you could be
he's born to remember
date of november: rodric lee'outa detoun kali
stanly
want nothing to miss
he needs his freedom, he needs the dreams that
he wish
your eyes are in his fantasies, read his dreams

-Lil' Mainy The Prince

From The Beat: Substituting imagination for reality has a certain power, but threatens to devour that which it aims to sustain. There is a certain point where fantasy deludes the brain into believing its own deceit. Moreover it is a distraction from what you really need to see — what keeps sending you to lock up and how you can stop yourself and buck up, and make a plan for how you will live safe and free, responsibly as a free man, without or without the lady of your dreams. Understand? It's important business when out at sea to spy dry land, head that way and take a stand, with or without a loving or helping hand.

Perspicuity

take me...
i belong to you
open my book you must read
beauty makes all
ugly makes beauty
explore my eyes while you wait on nightfall
my sensitive side will expose
let's brighten the dead rose
it's expressive
moving on is facile
staring must stay real
i'm not here to treat you badly
i just can realize
some eyes
that show a heart of love was treated badly
with eyes
look into them dreams permanently
of lying and cheating i must say i'm so sick
see
i promise that we will stay in perspective

-Lil' Mainy The Prince

From The Beat: Another romantic poem from your sensitive side, but we want to see the whole of you inside your heart and mind. Was it the sensitive side that put you here? Or is there a savage side you continue to feel but refuse to reveal? How can you change it or learn to tame it, if your refuse to name it? It's not that there's anything wrong with what you write, but it all seems to come from one side, and in that sense seems to come at us sideways. Give us a more full portrait of Rodric and what keeps bringing him here so quick each time he walks out the gate. It's fine to sound romantic, but unless you want to be the poet laureate of the penitentiary, it's time you take a stand with a more comprehensive portrait of yourself and your reality, not just dreaming in your cell but when you're out there, doing what? Raising hell?

When I Get Out

What's good, Beat? This your vato, Lil' Chuckie, doing my time in Camp. Well, before I get started on today's topic I would like to extend my love to all, y'all know who y'all is.

Well, on today's topic I would like to talk about when I get out. See this Saturday I'm going home for my HV! I'll go see my family and some of my homies, and I can't wait till that day gets here — it's only three days away! So I'll do good and come back, so I can get my another HV next week. Well, Beat, I'm out. One love, be safe.

-Lil' Chuckie

From The Beat: So you had a TR and then an HV? Or are you using these terms to mean the same thing? Either way, write us now about what you did with your first HV, and tell us if you got another one the next week. 'Cause there's nothing like being free!

I Drink

when it gets cold outside
i drink a bottle of eighteen hundred
it's like snow boots in the snow
it's like a blanket in the cold air
if you ever get cold outside thought
you shouldn't try that out there
because the cops might just bust you for
drinking
and bring you back here

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: Do you mean literally cold air, or when life gets dangerous and too hard out there? In the first case, it might help for a minute, and then you get colder if you don't see your house and get up in it. In the second, alcohol will make your thinking slow to a crawl, but you'll think you're all that till a bullet calls or you take another fall. Think, don't drink if you want to be warm and safe from harm.

When It's Cold Outside

When it cold outside, I get a blunt, get a beezzy to keep me warm, and get my grown man on! But if you youngtas wanna stay out of trouble, stay in the house — 'cause this lock down shh ain't kcool! Words of wisdom from me, and I'm out.

-Lil' Quesada

From The Beat: So why you want to tell the youngtas how to do cool and you won't do it yourself? Don't just tell them how to stay free, show them!

I Adapt

when its cold outside
i drink a bottle of hennesy
smoke some 'ports
and cuddle up with
my females
sometimes when
i'm locked in juvenile hall
i just use my extra time
and go to sleep when i'm stressed
when i'm on the outs
when the world is cold
— i'm cold
so i just adapt
and that's why i'm in camp

-Lil' Jonah

From The Beat: It seems on the outs like you're adapting, but the fact that you're here ought to tell you that you're not. Going cold when the world is cold will just have you locked down when you're old, or dying young. That's not adapting to how it's done.

When I'm Feelin' Cold

When I'm feelin' cold is when I get locked up. Then, once I get free, I'm back to my business. I be drinkin' and smokin' to wash away the bad memories and have a koo' time.

But when I'm feelin' real cold is when someone takes my homies like away. Then I become warm when we retaliate my homeboys death. I be cold when I'm having problems with my family, but then its coo' after a lil' bit. This is what I be doing when I'm feelin' cold.

-Clumsy

From The Beat: Honestly, retaliation is fool's response. It doesn't bring your homies back to life; it just fuels getting more of your homies killed — by the same wheel of retaliation. Stop spinning it, 'cause it's like you're contributing to your own homies' deaths.

How Do I Feel?

Sometimes I feel good, because I wake up to see another day. But sometimes I feel bad, because I'm locked up — and I get tired of the staff telling me what to do and when to do it! The only thing that keeps me calm, is going home on the weekend.

-Roderick

From The Beat: Yeah, you can live your life for a while for those weekends at home when you can see family. But don't let yourself slip back into the same old, or you'll put yourself even more under the control of a system in which you must do as you're told.

It's Hot

well, it's me again, rev.do
it's hot up here at camp
but i'm still blessed
it's another day that the lord has made
and i'm glad about it
and i go home this weekend
so i'm glad about it
i don't have to sit up here
it's been very hot
and it drains me
but i'm going to handle it
and keep doing a good job up here

-Rev.Do

From The Beat: Why do you always say we don't print you in The Beat? Well, read this and don't say it this week. Props on your good program, rev.do, you're a good man! Stick to your higher plan.

Seein' My Little Brother Cry

I'm up in D unit kickin' it, waitin' for the day I get out.

I am up in here wit' two of my homies, one of them are from my crew. I am missing my ex-girl . I wish I never messed up . Doin' the wrong things. I will playin' the game of chance and I knew it was a matter of time before I got caught up. I wish I didn't have to see my little brother cry when I got arrested. But I'm locked up, still puttin' it down for my crew.

I wish I could be out with my family and my ex. Well I got to go so peace out to all locked up and on the street. And I want to say I love you Joanna and mom

-Maniac

From The Beat: This is kinda heartbreaking... your true crew is your mom, your little brother, your family, your best self. Do you put it down for that crew? Those are the people who truly love you... if you stay true to them, then you'll never have to come back here again!

Caught Up

When I'm out I play with my daughter or talk to my girlfriend and that makes me feel better. I was sitting in my house and walked outside to smoke a cigarette and when I looked up a cop was sitting there and he asked what I've been doing and I said nothing and he said "what do you have on you?" I said "nothing" and he said "I have got warrants" and he took me to jail.

When I was in 6th grade we got out for summer vacation and I and my friend broke into the teachers lounge and stole the money out of the soda machine and phone booth and went back the next day (like idiots) and got caught.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: Sorry you got caught — both when you were in sixth grade and this time. What's next? When will you get out? And this time, with a family and girl and a daughter, what will you do to stay out? It sounds like in some ways you're a lucky young man, with lots to live for — a real family.

Camp Is the Problem

They told me they was going to send me home, and they lied to me. Now I'm up at Camp and still doing my thing.

It's cool up here, but ninjas be trying to hate. I should get to go home in a few weeks, but now I spend my weekends still at Camp. When I do go home on the weekends, then I'll be all in the door! Still, I'm doing my thang, and money goin' come soon — but money ain't the problem, Camp is. And it's time to get it out the way. This Cartier! So what it do?

-Cartier

From The Beat: Don't get your money the same old way. You may tell yourself that's not what got you caught up, but it's part of the life style that got you caught up. How do you make your money? Selling drugs? Now if you have a regular, legitimate, legal job, we apologize. Otherwise, Camp's not the problem, setting yourself up to get locked deeper in the system is the problem.

What's Wrong

haven't seen you in awhile
you call me all of a sudden
saying we should go chill
you say you got a man
but there's a sadness
in your tone when you spoke
what's the problem
he ain't doing you right
you wishing he was me
your one-and-only first true love
been by your side through it all
wipe your sad tears
with these gentle hands of mine
and turn that frown upside-down
wit' that glare in your eyes
when i stare at your eyes
you know he can't love you
like i've loved you
better yet just come here
and let me hug you

-Mien G-Money

From The Beat: It's a sweet, love poem that would make a cold heart warm. But the life you're living when you're not in her arms will bring you both great harm if love blossoms again. Why not quit that "G-Money" illicit hustle? Straighten out your life and your love will be less of a puzzle to one who cares, 'cause you can always be there (not filling her with fear that you'll be locked up in here).

A Letter Of Wisdom

what's happening beat
it's your boy karlitos
from out the cuts
last night i received a letter
from my boy yogi
(the beat remembers him)
i was locked up with him in max
he got transferred to santa rita
and he told me the same thing
i am going to tell y'all
to keep y'all head up
and don't let anyone get you down
when y'all going through rough stuff

-Karlitos

From The Beat: That's good advice as far as it goes, but how to stop volunteering to get roughed up by the system is something everyone needs to know, so listen — come in out of the rain, quit a game that's insane before all that's left of your life is pain.

Free Us

What's up, Beat! This that ninja Lil' Bee who don't listen but I'm original I'm in here again for some lil' shhh.

- Lil' Bee

From The Beat: It's up to you to free yourself. The system can let you out of the cages, but so long as you live that street life, you're still on mental lockdown.

RIP Mezzy Meech

What's up, y'all ! Yeah I'm still up in here missin' my dead ninjas Mezzy and Meech. I miss Mezzy and Meech way too much it wasn't even their time to go on the real. They will still be here wit' me and the hood but they was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I wish they could come back. It ain't even the same without them at all. I stay thinking about my ninjas all the time and every day. I'm gon' always love y'all when it's my time to got. I'm about to let this one slide on ice. Rest and peace Mezzy and Meech. I love and miss you Mezzy and Meech.

-Lil' Bugga

From The Beat: Ever since you started writing slide on ice, we think of skating rinks whenever you read your writing. And now we've got this image of Mezzy and Meech, these two kids, floating on some heavenly ice rink, skating around watching down through a floor made of glass, watching you, cheering you on. But you know what, they loved you, they wouldn't want you coming up before your time.... Honor what they went through by building up something better down here, for yourself and for your loved ones.

What Gets You

what gets you locked up
is weed, pills
because weed gets you
paranoid of anything that move
pills make you do
anything you want or think of
like robbin' people
so stay away from drugs

-Teg

From The Beat: There is so much truth in this little poem, we can only hope some of our readers take its meaning home! 'Cause if they do, they might just be home instead of locked up like you. Thanks for the message of hope: stay free with no dope.

Mic'd A'ight

man i don't really know what to write
but it's good — might
as well spit something 'bout life
what i like

and i know when i'm thinking back after i died
i'll be happy just 'cause i even held a mic
and i won't really care when i'm underground
robbin'

i won't even be trippin'
long as my family's all right

-Buddamilk

From The Beat: No thinking back when you're dead, so let the lyrics in your head not only spill out rhyme and rhythm but wisdom and good decisions all wrapped up in a rapper's sharper mind. Let your brilliance shine and illuminate the path to never ever doing time or dying young due to some crime you've done.

My Life

When I was eleven years old, I started getting into trouble and stealing cars and selling drugs. When I first got to juvenile hall for my first case, I thought it was cool — look at me now in Camp!

-Lil' Dee

From The Beat: Yeah, too many little youngsters think it's cool to come to the Hall like they're older brothers and sisters do. They pretend they're an OG, too. But the Y, the jails and the pen' are full of OG's, too — so let Camp be the end of it before it gets you.

First Verse Of "Where Would I Be?"

Where would I be without your love?

Will someone please tell me?

'Cause your love is so special

It has to be around me

I wake up every morning

Just to see your handsome face

Just the thought of you

And my heart begins to race

I can't imagine a day

That I'm not lying in your arms

I need to hear your sexy voice

I need to feel your charm

Those big brown eyes

Those sexy lips

I love your chocolate skin

But without the love you're giving me

I probably could not live

-Ri Ri

From The Beat: Love is a powerful thing. How does this person show his love? How do you show it back?

Hard Life

I have a hard life because I seen a lot of things when I was growing up, things like people getting shot, heads blown off, and stuff like that.

-Roderick

From The Beat: Yeah, it's hard growing up seeing things like that. It makes life harder. But you're smarter than to stay in a game that delivers so much death and pain.

Back in These walls.

What it do Beat Yeah dis Lil' Naudie-bo back up in here.

Last time I wrote to y'all I was at camp, and I didn't do so well, so I might sit up in hope for a minute and see what the judge say. Tomorrow I hope ya ain't in mine but whatever happen I ain't mad because I know my bra Cell up there watchin' ma back. He already watchin' out for me, 'cause I ain't goin' through it like I thought I was, and I know he got me off them streets for a reason, 'cause it is gettin' grimy in Oakland.

But yeah, we still missin you bra, I'm gonna get yo' name on my arm, hit up 'cause you know the one I got now ain't cool. But you see how all the bras goin' bad.

It ain't cool bra and I know you got me off the streets.

-Lil Naudie-bo

From The Beat: It's like you're praying to your boy in this piece, and we can feel the love you have for him. We respect that, but there's bullets out there waiting on the survivors that are left. Like you say, it's grimy out there. So now, when you come out, what are you going to do? Are you going to contribute to making them grimmer? Or do you have other ideas?

Twisted

It's the way you move that got me twisted
Love so tight makes my spirit be lifted.
Your style, smile and personality gets me
Without you in my heart it feels empty.

The many things we do together.

When you push against my skin you keep me warm

Like a sweater

You can be anything on my team

Tha star player is my dream

I can make a difference in your life baby gurl

Give it to you to make your toes curl.

Never break your heart.

Never raise my voice.

Were friends and lovers that's our choice.

Anything to see a smile across your face.

You in my mind helps me make it in this place.

You know now what relieves my stress.

Kisses on your neck and feelin' on ya chest.

Baby ain't no way I will let you down

Anything you need to learn I'll show you how!

Many things got me confused in my mind

Tellin' me to stop my hustle and grind.

You gave your heart to me and my love you've won

That's why I got to tell you you're my NUMBER ONE!

Dedicated to Elexis

-Jnice

From The Beat: These are great rhymes and you just get better and better. We'd like to add one thing, and we mean it with respect for your poetry and your relationship with your girl. No matter how pretty the words are, if you invite a girl to be on your "team," then you're saying she's not the only one. And what girl wants to hear that?

The DJ Update

This yo boy DJ

My mood: ready to complete my time

Missin': My family and wifey Meanybo

Dedicated song to everybody: I see you when you touch

down, I see you when you come home, stay strong. (E-40)

What's good with you Beat? Me I'm cool tryna stay

stress free, feel me? Only the strong survive! Yeah, I'm a

strong believer that yeah, though I'm on my way to amp

finally been here since March 7th. It was a pleasure workin'

wit' The Beat, I wish you all the best 'cause it's time for me

to move on and do what I gotta do feel me? Ai'ght then Stay

up!

-DJ

From The Beat: No DJ, it's been a pleasure working with you - we hope we never have to again! As in never in the lockdown pages, we'd be glad to hear about your triumphs in the free world. There's only one true way to "represent" East Palo Alto, and that's to get out there, become a successful, legit adult, and prove to the world that roses do grow from concrete.

Serious Shoes

Walk a mile in my shoes man. It's serious on the real. Most ninjas won't make it in my shoes, some might not follow in my footsteps. For y'all who do I wish the best.

If it was on my level you wouldn't walk a mile you would have to run five miles to catch up. In EPA its' do or die and the strong survive. Man I'm an original! I stay solid, beat my case in January and back in March still here in May over that bullshhh. That's what it's about my miles straight up. For all my people doin' time right now hold or stay strong. Stay solid

-Dj

From The Beat: Now that you've established that you're the biggest toughest meanest sumbitch around, why don't you write a little about your life for real. You've got so much talent, don't waste it on bravado. Do you know anything about the Taliban (which we cut)? About the fact that they knocked down thousand-year old statues just to prove they were the top. They destroyed history, they made it illegal for girls to learn to read, they made it ok to Stone a girl to death after she was raped, because the rape was her fault. They made it illegal to sing, to watch movies. Is that who you are? They're not tough people. Just cruel people. Is that who you are? No way. Now prove you're tough and face the challenge of getting your life back together.

How I Feel

how I feel is mad, sad
sometimes happy
i feel mad sometimes
because i'm in here in camp
and i can't see my family whenever i want
i'm mad because they told me
i was getting out and the d a
wanted to send me to camp
i get sad sometimes because
i cant play with my son
i can't spend time with my girlfriend
everyday
and i can't know she's okay and doing good
i'm also happy because at least
i get to go home and visit on weekends
so that's how i feel right now

-Ismael

From The Beat: Thanks for the update. The heart is a complex instrument, but don't let the anger mess up the benefit of getting those home visits. You don't really understand how valuable they are until you don't have them anymore. You feel? So let the mad and the sad, motivate you to stop doing the bad — so you can be home with your son and be glad!

My Momma

My momma is a Black queen she's always there when I need her. My mom is one person I could count on when I'm in trouble she is the one who puts clothes on my back and food on my table and I love her so-so-so much for that. While you have a mom you better be thankful for having one. Some people don't have a mom to cry to or they don't have a mom to cook for you when they hungry, but I do, so I thank God everyday for allowing me to have.

-Jabrie

From The Beat: What a lucky woman your mom is to have such a loving loyal son like you! But you need to do a better job showing her some love and respect, because coming to the Hall is straight disrespectful to your loving and caring mom.

Flow

Man I can turn a
mob of elephants into
a mob of mice
put ya hands on
my money I'm a
give ya head a price
Fast like a nascar
Tasscar my ninjas
Say I go past hard

-Young Tay

From The Beat: This flow is short but your rhymes here are fresh and original — we hope you keep writing poems, you obviously have a guile.

Tonight It Will Fall

the nights to fall
people going to fall
the world's so cold
getting with a darker crew
feel like to die with a suit
wearing black tonight
you will start a fight
(to be continued)

-No Name

From The Beat: This dark little beginning to a rhyme, has us wondering what you'll write next time. It's almost like a dream, where feelings are portrayed as scenes.

Love

she has a sweetness
tender feelings inside
there's my weakness
she's a gangsta girl
she'll be there
fasten her safe belt and ride
she's a faithful girl
i'll give her diamonds
'cause she already got pearl
she understands the emotions i have
that i'm a young prince whose heart been stabbed
she's shapely in all the right places
crazy things happen
she showin' in all their faces
pain becomes in the after effect
of course she's right
she's the main thing left
reason being she lives
her name is love
something heart and soul could only give

-Lil' Mainy The Prince

From The Beat: You need to make up your mind. Do you see love as heart and soul, or a gangster girl that hit then roll? One's the real thing and the other is just big pimping. You know that's true. So why you want to mix it all up like you do? Maybe you're just pimping love, too.

Untitled

You know this your boy, Jonah, up at Camp doing the damn thang! But I be out, and when I get out, I go show everybody how to get money and show it. You feel me? But I won't be out soon, so y'all is lucky!

But you know when I get out what is going to happen, and I feel like all y'all need to step yo' game up — because y'all hella bootsy! So holla at your boy when he get out there. This is your boy, Jonah.

-Lil' Jonah

From The Beat: What you need to show folks is that you know that keeping your freedom is no joke, so you won't put it at risk for that little bit of illicit wealth that disappears fast and leaves you in a cell by yourself.

When It Raining

when it raining
ninjas get wet
so stay dry ninjas
ninjas always stay high
i wonder why

-Lil' Wonder

From The Beat: If you choose to stay in the rain, selling drugs on the spot whether it's cold or hot, and you know the pain of a bullet or incarceration is what you're facing — to be insane enough to stand in the rain like a sucka, you try to stay high as a fathamucka.

Why?

As many times that I have been in situations and when I'm in the predicament that I'm in, I ask myself why do I make these mistakes. Is it to stay around this person 24/7 or just to let that person know that I'm no square, then after I got the punishment I found out that all I needed was to put God first in my life.

-Jaqueese

From The Beat: It sounds like maybe you've been doing things you don't believe are right and letting other people influence you. We're glad you're thinking about it all because that's the first step toward making changes. Keep thinking critically about your situation and you'll come up with the answers you need—spirituality is an area where many, many people have found strength.

Untitled

Hey, what's up, Beat? This is Yoyo. I wanna say what' up to all this week I'm going to write about my fam' coming to Camp. He looks like a clown! No, but he's hella cool, and we're going to do our program and get out. For all the new people who don't know, we got locked up 'cause we sent a guy to the hospital. So till next week, peace out, Beat.

-YoYo

From The Beat: Are you really bragging about sending somebody to the hospital? Don't you know that truly doing this program means re-programming your mind so don't have to do more time after your release 'cause your sick thinking makes your life diseased — committing violence and criminal acts till you're deceased or caught up again by the police.

Me And My Love

I'm a light skin female that's from Oakland and I just want to say to everybody out there to keep your head up and always have a positive attitude.

Me, I had a negative mind that put me in jail. This is not a place for a girl like me. But I'm so lonely in here, I miss my family and boyfriend. He's the love of my life. I didn't treat him right and I wish that I could tell him that I love him. I hope that he feels the same way about me. We been together for two years and we gon' always be together forever. I love you boo be safe and leave them hoers alone out there. For life remember. This shhh ain't no game it's life. The streets ain't cool. Keep your head in school. We ain't perfect. Please accept me for who I am. I'm sorry.

-Bonita

From The Beat: We're glad that you're moving toward a more positive outlook and understand that it's hard to be away from your family and loved ones. Good luck with working things out with your man...when you get out will you be able to stay positive and out of the halls? We hope so.

I Need You Baby

Sitting in the hall
I look at these off white walls
And I think of my man
And why can't I hold him
Or lay up with him
Until it's damn near noon
To be able to see the sun and the moon
Then I know I'm at home
And not in here alone
Without him near
I always have so much fear
Of when again will he be near
For me to see
Touch, taste, and hold
And let him know
His love is worth more then gold
To let him know he's one of a kind
And through darkness my love
For him will always shine
Bright like the sun
Because he is the only one
That's made me feel this way
I can't wait for the day
I can hold, kiss and caress him
To be with him forever more
And never again be locked
Behind a metal door
Separating me from my freedom
When I know
I really need to be with him
Not only for my sanity
But because
Without him I don't exist to humanity
So now can't you see
I need you young baby
I really miss you and need to be with you
So I can hurry up and get through with this
Then baby we'll both be legit

-Young's Lady

From The Beat: We hope Young is as loving and respectful to you as you are to him, and that he'll help you stay safe and out of Juvie for good. That way you won't have to miss him like you do now—we know how hard it is to be separated from someone so close to your heart.

Grandkids

When I have kids, I want my grandkids to trust nothing but family and the people that try to help you not come to jail. So, my kids don't be like me.

I'm in here fighting Robbery(211) and Grand Theft(487) and a warrant. So, I don't know what to do. I ain't pull the robbery, but I pulled the grand theft. Don't be like me in the future.

-Lil' Pug On One

From The Beat: Hmm... what do you suggest as an alternative to the lifestyle that you live? What advice would you give to your kids/grandkids about living a positive life? Is it too late for you? Maybe you can turn your life around and be a living example. What do you think?

The People I Left

Man, I am in here for bullshhh! They trying to play me, they trying to keep me from my mom, my sister, and my rouge. I left them all alone. Why am I up in here? I'm just ready to go home and be with my family!

-Young Taliban

From The Beat: Young Taliban, what can you do? There must be something. Even if it's playing by their rules or just being patient. You must do what you gotta do, to get what you want. You got yourself into this situation, it's up to you to find a way out.

Boyfriend Keeps Me Warm

When it's cold outside. I miss my boyfriend because he makes me feel warm and safe inside. When I feel like I don't have anyone he's there.

-Rachael

From The Beat: Having a special someone to warm you is definitely a good thing. We're glad you have someone who's always there to make you feel safe.

A Letter To My Grandchild

Dear granddaughter. One: go to school, finish college before thinkin' about boys, and think about others but put yourself first always. Think before you do things or else you'll be in a place you don't want to be. Jail.

-Tempestt

From The Beat: That all sounds like good advice. Will you follow it yourself? It's not too late.

When It's Cold, Stay Home

When it's cold outside, how would I stay warm? I would stay warm by putting on a sweater and staying inside. When it's cold, if it's cold outside, why would you even go out?

The only time I go somewhere and it's chilly outside, is if I'm working on something. Other than that, I would stay in the house. When I was out of juvenile hall, I was working at Pack-and-Save on Fortieth in Emeryville, but now I'm stuck in a bear cave.

-Nathaniel

From The Beat: Staying home is a way to stay warm when it's cold out and safe when it's dangerous. Going to and from work, without hanging out on the spot helps keep you safe, too. So, how'd you get caught up when you were doing what you were supposed to do?

On One

— Part One —

JT: What's up, ninja?

TL: Aw jus' chillin', tryin'a get on one.

JT: Is that right?

TL: Yup.

JT: Where you about to get your pills from?

TL: Ninja, let's go to the park.

JT: Let's do it then.

TL: Hold on, hold on. Ninja, you got some 'Ports?

JT: Yup.

TL: Let's thizz then, my ninja.

JT: How many pills you gettin'?

TL: About two or three, maybe even four.

JT: Man!

TL: What about you?

JT: About two.

TL: You ain't tryin'a stay on that long?

JT: Forget it then, let's go all night long.

TL: Let's go get the girls.

JT: Let's do it.

TL: Wait, wait, wait. We need some bags.

JT: How much you talkin' 'bout.

TL: Man, about a zip of that purple.

JT: Is that right?

TL: Yup.

JT: You drivin', ninja.

TL: Just make sure you put on that Mac Dre.

JT: All right.

TL: Fire up a 'Port.

JT: Forget that 'Port, ninja.

TL: Oh yeah, we do got that purp'.

JT: Oh yup.

TL: Roll up then, ninja.

JT: This some sticky icky, ninja.

TL: I'm hella high, man.

JT: I'm thizzin' hella hard.

TL: Ninja, you popped already? I'm about to get on

right now.

JT: Three at once?

TL: Yup.

JT: Ninja, you crazy.

TL: You know me Lil' JT.

JT: Pass that bottle. Ninja, don't crash — watch out.

TL: Shut yo' scary self up.

JT: All right, ninja.

TL: Ninja, just be cool.

JT: Ninja, five-oh behind us.

TL: I don't give a what.

JT: Man, we just got pull' over.

TL: Man!

JT: Stomp it, ninja.

TL: Doowhoop.

JT/TL: We out.

— Part Two —

TL: Doowhoop.

JT: Watch out, ninja.

TL: Oh man, we are about to crash.

JT: Ninja, no we not. Turn that way, turn that way.

TL: Down what way?

JT: Hit the cuts, ninja.

TL: Hey, where they at?

JT: Ninja, we lost them.

TL: Oh man, there they go.

JT: Stomp it, ninja.

TL: Let's hit this corner and jump out.

JT: Let's do it.

TL: Skeert-baaaa.

JL: Oh man, ninja.

TL: Man my ass, I'm gone.

JT: My door jammed.

TL: Grab that bottle and that thang, boy.

JT: Forget that, ninja.

TL: Forget it.

JT: I'm out.

TL: Run through that street. Then we gon' split up.

JT: Call my phone, ninja.

Peace

where's the peace
around these streets
i'll rap
if you give me a beat
so raw would make the audience
get out they' seat
why is there violence
it needs to stop
it needs to be silenced
i hate it
can we get along
if you know right from wrong
i got life plans
now bigger than king kong
where's the peace
grab some weed and chief
but the pain from these streets
like coral reefs
are deep
where is the peace

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: While we cannot endorse weed, whatever keeps you off the street for a minute just might save your life from those too deep up in it, 'cause the streets are going dumb in a way that has nothing to do with fun — just bloodshed, drive-by's and life on the run. So stay off the spot, live in the sun and be at peace when the day is done. Keep peace in your heart, and you'll know from the start where is the peace in these funky streets.

J-Cats

You know what I hate? I hate when people come to jail and lie, tell stories that one of their friends told them yeah I got a scraper, I got hella money, yea I sell coke. Ninja stop lying. Step ya'll game up you ninjas is old. Man come with a new.

-Dirty Nell

From The Beat: Why do you think people lie? Do they feel like that have to compete to get respect?

Why I Pop Thizzles

don't rate me no
i'm not a 'r and b' singa
i'm a gangsta rapper
to them square rubic cubes
i do pills because i feel different
like just feel hella good
you feel me
pop go to a function or side show
and go eighteen dummy on a girl's car
doors open scrapin' getting dummy
that how it goes in the bay yaddamean
keep it lit all day every day
nothing but purple grapes

-Obtrice

From The Beat: For someone fortunate enough to make the move from maximum security to Camp, you sound like fool, sure enough. You're just giving the finger to yourself, 'cause this mindless behavior will just mess you up all over again. Some people never learn, and they end up getting burned. Guess you want another turn at stressing over all you're missing on the outs, and we don't mean ecstasy and weed, but freedom and the simple things that please — the things you pray for when you're locked in a cell and get down on your knees.

Writing vs. Talking

What it is Beat?! You know how it is, it's yo' homeboy Bizzy. I just wanted to say this is what it is because every time I am on a thizz I just feel like me.

My first time poppin' I popped a pill and a half and I was on some E&J it was on my birthday too. You know we got to do it on that lucky day.

Damn I did too much talking this session. Damn I did not write what I got to say, forget it I'll just write it next time. But to all going through some stuff right now stay strong. Keep Lil' Bizzy in your prayers. One love.

-Lil' Bizzy

From The Beat: We love it when you write, but of course we know how fun it is to talk with the homeboys when you're spending most of the day in your cell. We look forward to learning more about you next time you write and lastly, this poppin' a thizz to feel good is quite scary given you need drugs in order to feel like yourself. Tell us more.

TL: All right. I'm a try to make it to the spot.

JT: Be safe, ninja.

TL: Don't even worry about me.

JT: Man, we got ourselves in some deep.

TL: Ring, ring.

JT: Hello.

TL: Where you at?

JT: Runnin', ninja — call me back.

TL: Click.

JT: Where you at?

TL: In a bush.

JT: Ha, ha, ha, ha.

TL: Ninja, what you laughing at?

JT: Yo' dumb self.

TL: Come get me.

JT: Ninja, it's hot. Call me in about ten minutes.

TL: Be cool when you comin', 'cause five-oh still out.

JT: All right, ninja.

TL: Oh man, click.

JT: What happen? He just hung up the phone. Let me call back. — "You've just reach the voice mail of TL Baby." — Man, I hope that ninja didn't get caught.

-Lil' JT and Lil' TL

From The Beat: Readers of this 'zine know that however many times you got away with it, you did sooner or later get caught. As a matter of fact, both of you are writing this from max. For sure, it's good for a few laughs, 'cause how many fools reading our pages have lived just what you're describing here and have felt that rush and that fear? But the bottom line is — this type of life is what got you here, whatever charge you caught. So when you stop laughing, ask yourself how many times you need to get taught before you learn. The problem is every time you got away you thought you could do it again without getting burned — then one day, it's your turn. So, we have to ask — have you learned?

I Stay Cold

it's cold on these street
you get to keep your head up
stay on point
don't let the enemy get you
stay doing hot stuff
and things gon' keep you warm
make sure you have somewhere
to stay and eat
but you can't be no fake about this
this not how i stay warm
this is how i stay cold
out here doing what i got to do
to get money and feed my seeds
i can't die
i got to live for what i got
that what keeping me outside on cold
night
this ain't 'bout how cold it is
it's how hot you can get it
that's what i got to say
one love

-Young Quez

From The Beat: How much money are you bringing to our seed while your locked behind a door and you don't have the key? No, you got tricked into choosing a line of work that ends with you working for the state for chicken feed, just so they'll turn the key and let you out of your cell in the penitentiary. So when you get free from this baby jail, make sure you find another way to get your mail — keep at this cold street life and you are guaranteed one day to fail. So wake up your brain and change your game.

When It's Cold

When it's cold outside, how so I stay warm?
When it's cold outside I stay warm by putting on a jacket or stay wrapped up in a sweater, or a hoodie, or stay in the house, and stay up by the heater, or keep warm with a person you trust, or know and you can feed off each other's body heat. That's how I will get warm when it's cold outside.

-Pookie

From The Beat: Pookie, those are some great ways of staying warm. The body heat is our favorite. Or you can jump up and down to get your heart rate up, that works too.

Be Home Soon

When I'm feeling bad, like when I'm thinking about my family, or being institutionalized for so long and away from my family. When I think about that I just sit. Or lie down and just think and tell myself to just calm down it's gonna be cool 'cause I'm not gonna be in a group home forever. I'm gonna be home soon so I just calm down.

-Kid

From The Beat: Great advice to all Beat Readers. Calm down, be with your feelings, and visualize your freedom.

Fights in the Hall

These ninjas in here make me hella mad always talking up under their door talking about I'm gon' beat ya ass when we come out and all that other stuff. Man ya'll ain't gonna bust a grape in a fruit fight. Ya'll wouldn't tie ya'll shoes if ya'll had shoe laces.

-Dirty Nell

From The Beat: Whoa, Nell, why do you need to insult? In some of your writing, you express such courage and pride, an ability to turn the other cheek. Here, you don't do that. We all have different moods, and that's ok, but what changed in you between there and here? We can only imagine what it is like to live this incarcerated juvenile hall life on the daily. What a soap opera!

Living In Max Unit

Living in a AlaCo max unit, is hell in a way.
You see the same ninjas everyday,
eat the same food everyday.
Got to shower with the ninjas.
You got to get out the shower when staff tell you to get out.
In a way, it's better than over on the boys' side,
but it ain't nothing to be proud about.
I ain't gone be here for that much longer.
I will be goin' to a group home.

-Lil' Webbie

From The Beat: We're glad you're one of those passing through max who is getting another chance to get his act together. So do a good program at that group home, and don't let anyone mess your program up. Stay focused. 'Cause if you keep running, they'll decide the only place to send you is someplace you can't run from, like CYA. You don't need to see that day!

Dear Granddaughter

Dear granddaughter,
Some things I want to warn you to exclude.
This world is richer than a million dollars,
so it's really complicated for me to start from the beginning
because I was not even born in the middle,
not even close probably.
More closer to the end there's no specific way I can explain
everything but I'll start from the basics.
#1-life is not easy, it's going to be hard...
(To Be Continued)

-Lil' Mookie

From The Beat: Lil' Mookie, this is the start of a wonderful piece. Life is not easy, but you've made it thus far. What advice do you have? We're waiting.

Think Smarter

What's up, Beat? This is Big Will from Hayward. Well, this is my first time writing to y'all from Alameda County Juvenile Hall. To start off, I want to say what's up to all.

Well, when things get cold outside the things I do I know are not the best things to do, but they help me chill out. When things get hard out there, I don't really sweat then. I just smoke a purple blunt and go on in life, even though the problem won't go away right away. I know that problems don't always last. Also if you let some things go and try to forget about them, it might be for the best.

Well as for being locked up, I ain't even trippin' 'cause this ain't nothing to me. At times it might get boring, but it's all good. That way I'll know next time to try harder and think smarter to get away from five-oh. Well, I don't got nothing else to say but to tell the homeboys to stay up and be safe.

-Big Will

From The Beat: The safest way is to stay away from trouble — and the best way to get away from five-oh, is not to do the crime they'd be chasing you for. But you're right about how sometimes it is best to just let things go and do nothing. Other times, a problem only gets worse if you don't do anything about it. Don't just educate your mind to know the difference, educate your heart — 'cause when your heart wants what's right, you don't have to be smarter or harder to stay free. Just do you and you'll do cool. (You wrote this in max, but how are things in Camp where you're reading it today?)

Praying Makes Me Warm

What I do when I feel cold when I'm here in Juvenile Hall is just to pray to God that I get out and just keep my head up and just wait for time to pass.

I just tell myself that I'm strong and I can get through this. I just think about my mom and all my family and all the fun memories we had together and think about all the memories we still can have together. But I still be cold in here and I do cry.

-Looking For Warmth

From The Beat: It's okay to cry too—everyone has to cry sometimes. We know you can get through this too, and stay safe with your loved ones, making new memories to keep you warm.

Turning the Other Cheek

When people turn their backs on me and I feel cold or lonely I try to think to myself he/she is going through a bad time and I just forget about it and when I see or talk to that person again everything is normal it's like it never happened.

-Dirty Nell

From The Beat: Good for you. It takes a man to look at things from another's perspective.

Love Myself

I love myself all day
If you a gigolo
Don't come my way
Because I am on a lovers Bonnie and Clyde
mission
On the flip side only
And not even the world can stop us.

-Lil' Mookie

From The Beat: Bonnie and Clyde died in a shoot out. Come on now, you can think bigger than that! If you really love yourself, plan your life, not your death.

when things get cold
outside the things I do
I know are not the best
things to do, but they help
me chill out.

No Joke

What it do Beat, this ya boy Lil' Naudie Bo. So you know I never write on the topic 'cause I do my do.

First off, rest in peace to our bra Marcellus. We love and miss you, so yeah, no joke out here in the streets of Oakland you see we just lost one of our brothers.

When they find out what they gonna do with me it's all good, get back out there, get my eat on for the summer, not this summer but the next. Ninjas out here been going through some thangs and don't nobody understand us so don't hate when we out here eatin' and getting it however we get it, but yeah my homies need to be get the hell out of here so we can get back out there and continue to eat like our bra Cell want us too. Till next time.

-Lil' Naudie Bo

From The Beat: We'd like to think your dead friend wishes for you to live a long life, to get out of the game. To find another way out of poverty. Not to feel stuck like a magnet to this negative life. To have the belief that you will not die for your shhh but you will die a happy old man with hella grandkids around you. Marcellus may he rest in peace he has paid the highest price for his life. Don't follow him.

Stuck

I sit here looking at these walls
Thinking I'm gonna crumble down

-Dry Cement

From The Beat: We hope you don't crumble, and maybe next week you can write some more to tell us about what's going on. Sometimes writing can be therapeutic.

It's Cold Outside

I'm out here hustling and it's cold outside.
I'm out here thuggin' and it's cold outside.
I'm out here takin' shhh that ain't mine, but it's cold outside
I got rocks in my mouth but it's cold out here.
I'm tryna get warm so I drink some Henny,
Then I bus' a couple of sales and I drink some mo'.
Now my money's comin' 'cause I snatched this 'ho'e.
I told her that I got a shot for her through my back do'.
Now I know that when it's cold outside
And I can't jook my rocks to cop some Henny and some pills to pop.

-Irie GU

From The Beat: So you've found a way to get out of the cold outside by putting yourself in this nice, warm and comfortable hotel where all your meals are provided, where they give you the clothes to wear, where you get to shower with friends, where you have your own room, and where you have adults to watch over and protect you... Something's missing from your thinking, so let us put in a new thought for you to consider: It's also cold inside prison!

"Doin' Time"

I'm in YGC, man, doin' my time
I sit in my room, man, tryna rhyme
See the staff, they always screwin' with me
Then they put me in my room and I can't even pee
So I knock and they won't open the door
And I sit back down and stare at the floor
So I knock, they still won't open the door
(to be continued)

-Joann GU

From The Beat: Are you saying that the staff is messing with you for no reason? Why did they pick on you instead of someone else? If we asked the staff why they pick on you, would their answer be different from yours? In what ways? Anyway, this is a strong beginning. We look forward to hearing the rest...

Don't Do Drugs

Man, all I got to say is don't do drugs. I got on drugs at 15 and couldn't stop. I have two kids that I can't see 'cause of drugs. Drugs will take you to jail, or even worse, your grave!

I'm locked up and they won't let me out... Go dumb wit' ma purple and khakis and slippers on and I can't go home. It's your choice, so make the right one. Love yourself.

-Girl SW GU

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing, Girl SW. (We had to change your Beat name a little since we can't print anyone's last name.) It sounds like you have learned a few things the hard way. Or, at least we hope you've learned. Of course, telling people not to do drugs is excellent advice, but if you aren't living it it's empty advice. What kind of help do you need to control your disease? Are you getting the help you need?

My Crazy Life

W'at up Beat? This is Goofy up in B5 just tyin' to make my tiempo fly by. It's a trip being in here all shot up wit' no one in here givin' a damn about you, que no? Pero no pedo (it's nothing).

Some day soon enough I'll be back out wit' my familia. In here all these chavalas runnin' their mouth, pero no se ponen en nada, que no (It doesn't amount to anything but hot air). But either way I gotta keep my composure and stay trucha. Well Beat, my time's up for today, pero mucho respeto to all. Keep trucha.

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: It is scandalous that you should still be locked up while still suffering from multiple gunshot wounds! But let's talk about when you get out of here and back together with your family. We've heard the story about how you got shot, and we believe what they did to you was more than shady. But at the same time, we also believe that you contributed to your own fate by the way you handled the situation. So what we want to know is how this terrible event has shaped or changed your thinking. Will you do anything differently when you're out? Will you start doing things you haven't done (like go to school regularly)? Will you stop doing things you have done (like the things that bring you into the hall)?

Dear Life

W'at it do? I see life ain't boo right now. But we gotta step this up. I'm gay, I pop and smoke. Where is my mind? I don't know. My lil' bra got hit in the hip. My life ain't been the same since I first came to YGC. What life has taught me... is that the white man can take my freedom but never my knowledge. I thank you life to a certain extent.

-Irie GU

From The Beat: Did the white man take your freedom, or did you give it to him? Of course your life hasn't been the same since you came here, how could it be? But it's the life you lead out there that brings you here, so we hope that life has taught you more than to point your finger at someone else, and that you have learned — or will learn — that until you accept responsibility for your own actions and their predictable consequences, you will find yourself in this or worse situations, blaming whoever.

Staying Warm

I smoke weed to ease my mind. I play football and basketball.

-D-M B1

From The Beat: What's the longest you've gone without smoking weed on the outs? Although it might be a help in easing your mind temporarily, once the effects wear off you have all the same stress as before, without having put any time into addressing the source of the stress. Since you can't smoke in the hall, what other strategies of comfort have you developed? Playing football and basketball will also definitely help you chill and give you other perspectives on any problems you may have. Good moves.

Love's Blind

Love's blind and life is a game in which
I try not to focus on anything but getting rich
See, that's my problem... I don't focus on me or my life
When people look at me they tell me I be on another-ass hype
But people don't understand; my situation is different see
They have family to go home to and I don't
The only home and family I have is the streets
That's why I'm back up here writin' hella Beats
I know what I have to do, but it's hard to accomplish something
When no one really cares for you
I'm tryna be betta, but at the same time I need chedda
I don't know what else to write, but chea I'm out

-Joann GU

From The Beat: We know it's hard to accomplish something in your situation, but you have a lot going for you. You are very bright, creative, and have a flare for writing. [Look at how we changed your first line to make it Beat appropriate, but also to show you that there are so many ways to express the same thought in English that you don't have to rely on the same old words and phrases that everyone else uses!] There is so much you could do that others without your gifts could not. But brains and skills are not enough. You also have to have the self-discipline and maturity to think long term, and to be able to make those adult decisions to sacrifice some things you like doing today for a better tomorrow. The dilemma you face is that your need for "chedda" keeps putting you behind bars where the only chedda you're likely to get is the bait on a mousetrap!

Take Responsibility

When I'm in my room I think about all the girls I was with. I also think about how I hurt some of them. I pray to do good each night, to wash away all my sins that I did in the past.

It hurts me to think about those horrible memories again that I did in the past. I wish I could see all those girls I hurt and apologize to every single one of them for my actions and tell them that I am a changed man and I'm taking responsibility for my own actions like a man, and apologizing for my actions.

Ninjas reading this, if you hurt a girl in the past or are hurting a girl, apologize. Be a man and take responsibility. Confront all of 'em and step up to the plate and do you tang.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: Again, you come with excellent advice about how to take responsibility for past hurts. We appreciate it. But we wonder, Billy, if there is any other area of your life besides love where you feel like you need to take responsibility for past mistakes? Anyway, saying you're sorry is a very good place to begin a new path in life.

Getting Out Of Jail

When I get released from jail, I plan to continue my education by going back to school and getting my high school education. I was currently enrolled in getting my high school Proficiency Exam Certificate, but it only works in California.

With my future and mother in my mind, I finally realized that going to real school would get me out of trouble. It's also something that I can prove to myself because of my current situation. I also plan to quit many things when I get out. One of them is hanging around friends that don't get you in trouble.

-Christopher B1

From The Beat: We don't know if it's this episode at juvenile hall, simple maturity, or something else, but this piece tells us that you have taken a major step out of childhood and into adulthood. We are particularly impressed that you see a connection between your own future success and the pain you've caused your mother. This suggests that you are serious about changing directions — and that the direction you name, "going to real school," is exactly the prescription you need. You've obviously thought your plans for the future through. In fact, we have a prediction: we believe that if you keep to this determination, you will find yourself in college where you will be exposed to ideas and concepts you never thought about before, and those new experiences will take you in an entirely new direction... and that you will surprise yourself at your own accomplishments.

With my future and
mother in my mind, I
finally realized that
going to real school
would get me
out of trouble.

Missing My Lil' Brother

What's up, Beat? My name is Lil' C. I want to tell you about my lil' brah. He got killed and I miss him so much I cry at night sometimes. He was my life. Man, I don't have no people in my life. I got to go stay down.

-Lil' C B5

From The Beat: It's very sad to read that your brother got killed. We wish we could do something to ease that pain, but there's nothing to do but try to find a way to live your own life safely and freely, so that you can always keep the memory of your brother alive inside you.

Why We Killin' Each Other?

Damn another young man died. Why is all these young men killing one another, can you tell me that? This is my lil' message about why kids are killing each other. All it take is one shot to mess yo' life up.

-Man Man B1

From The Beat: We wish we had a nice, simple answer to your question, Man Man. One thing we know is that it is the older generation that sets up the younger generation to die. In Iraq, the old men who run this country send young men and women into harm's way (not their own children, of course), and it is the young who pay with their lives and their limbs. In the "war at home," it is the OGs who send the youngsters into the streets fighting "causes" the young had nothing to do with creating, and the price is paid in blood. The only thing we know to say is that you can control only you, and not the streets or anyone else. So, while you send a very positive and important message, it's how you live your life that will determine your fate.

My Mom

My mom? My mom is a good mom. She drives the Muni bus. She works five days out of the week. My mom always been there for her kids. My momma is a single parent. My momma is just a good momma and she will always be a good mom until the end of time.

Facts: She's funny and loud. Sometimes she likes to play her music up loud and she's playful.

-Jacori B1

From The Beat: Your mom sounds like she's a lot of fun, Jacori, and that she works very hard for you and her other kids. What kind of music does she like to listen to up loud? Do you like that music, too? What do you think she wants most for (and from) you for all that she's done? We bet that the best gift you could give her has nothing to do with things (not cars, not houses, not diamonds), and everything to do with you being there with her, where you belong. If you learn how to stay out of places like this, you'd truly be showing her the love and respect she deserves.

Going Back To My Placement

What's up, Beat? It's me, Smiley. Damn, I'm back again because I AWOLed from my foster home. I ran because I went to get high with my friend. Damn, but now that I wrapped five days later after I AWOLed, I want to go back. But I don't know if they are going to take me back, because I was doing hella bad up in there. I talked to my PO already and he told me he's going to see what he can do to help me.

Today my foster home people came to see me and they asked me if I wanted to go back and why. They told me they gon' see if they take me back, but I don't know. I hope next week they come get me. So I'll write yo' later. Peace.

-Smiley B1

From The Beat: When you ran, did you think past your immediate desire to get high? Did you ask yourself, "What's going to happen next?" That's a critical question, and if you had asked yourself that question, it would show that you are maturing. But since you didn't really consider the consequences, what are you going to tell the foster home people that will convince them that this time you won't run even if you feel like it? How will they come to see you as a responsible young adult rather than an irresponsible child? Why do you think this time will be different from last time? We hope you get a second chance, but only if you treat it with the respect it deserves.

Money, Money, Money

If I didn't have to worry about money because I had enough of it, I would have to worry about the haters and the people that's tryin' to take it. But other than that I wouldn't have to worry about anything really, because I would make sure me and my family got everything we want and need.

And plus, if I had enough money I wouldn't have to worry about the police no more, because if I had enough money I could still do the same thing I do but just put them on the payroll, because there's no such thing as too much money, 'cause I got to get money or get nothing. Even if it's in the worst way 'cause that's how I was brought up and that's how I'm gone go down. And you could get it if you know how.

So even I had what you consider enough money, I would still do the street thing because it fun, and there's no such thing as too much of anything, but there is a such thing as not enough, especially when it comes to money. So like I said, I get money or get nothing. You could get it if you know how, straight up. And if you can't feel me and don't like where I'm coming from, then you ain't real in my eyes and that's all that counts to me.

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: Well, we guess we ain't real in your eyes because we definitely aren't feeling you. In fact, we're sad to say that this piece suggests a certain bankruptcy of imagination on your part since we set the question up to have you consider doing things other than getting money, and you can't even do that! It's a pity, too, Vinny, 'cause you're a smart boy. But we know far too many people as smart or smarter than you locked up for long stretches of their lives because they thought being smart was all they needed. It wasn't and it isn't. You say "there's no such thing as too much of anything," but we wonder if that includes too much of prison time? If that doesn't worry you, then you go ahead and make your money. You can be one of the smartest people on your tier!

If I Had Money

If I had money, I really don't know what I would do. I will just try to stay alive and stay away from the police and help out the poor people that don't have any money. And I will help out my family with bills.

-DeAndre

From The Beat: It sounds like you would be very responsible with the money you had if you didn't have to worry about getting it. Why would you have to stay away from the police if you didn't need to go out to hustle money?

Define Yourself

What it do? My name is Cartoon comin' like a tycoon, showin' respect to all who be about it and just droppin' some lines about myself. The way I see myself is righteous. There's always a right and wrong, but it depends to what yo' guidelines are.

If you to the rules of the streets, then you gotta go wit' it regardless of right or wrong. Even if I know it's wrong, I'ma go wit' it. I be on the block every day, bald-head gangster threaded with a white T, my creased Ben Davis and my Cortez, ready for war, always trucha.

We already know what time it is but regardless, I gotta keep my composure. They be giving charges out like it's candy.

A'rite then, I gotta go. So mucho respect to all, with love.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: We like your writing, Cartoon, but we don't think you've begun to define yourself. We can understand your faithfulness to the street code, but weave some reality into that life by recognizing the costs it demands from you. Your youth will be spent under the thumb of a bunch of people who don't even know you, but whom you've given power over your life to tell you when to get up, go to the bathroom, eat, speak, etc. You can dress in fly as you want, but if your choices lead you here (or the far worse places they have waiting for you down the line), then you'd better find some place safe to store all those fine fits, 'cause you won't be wearing them.

My Mom Visiting Me In YGC Doesn't Work

I want to go home because I miss my family. When my mom came up to YGC to see me, that don't work. When I come home, I will stay off the street.

Stop hanging with people that gets you caught with the police. Don't sell dope. I never in my life sold dope. Don't never play with guns, don't get caught. Really, don't play with guns and get with law.

I had a fight with two boys that tried to jump me, but I hit one with a stick and he called the police. They found me at school, and that how I ended up with he law. Now I'm in YGC hoping to get out.

-Andre B1

From The Beat: We hope you get out, too, Andre, but if you do, what will happen the next time you get into a fight? When you look back, can you think of any other way you could have handled the problem without picking up a stick? You're advice about not selling drugs and not playing with guns is excellent advice, but we'd like to add one more item: Avoid fighting, and you have a better chance of avoiding these consequences.

My Life

I don't like the way my life is going. I just can't help it. My life isn't all that perfect. My life is going the wrong way by gang banging, selling out in the street. My life isn't supposed to be going that way. My life is supposed to be in school and doing the right things. And be successful in life.

Life out in the street is only giving my mom stress, but I am not doing the right things. I don't know how to control my mind. My mind tells me to go to the block — I can't help it. No one is telling me to do this — my mind is telling me. I know I could change, but I am just letting my mind control me. I can't even believe I am in YGC just for being stupid. The day I got locked up, that day was the day I realized that gang bangin' and stealing is stupid.

-Victor B1

From The Beat: This is a very interesting piece, Victor. Even though you know that gang banging and the block lead to the loss of your freedom, you find yourself powerless to stop! But we're here to tell you that you are far from powerless. You do control your mind, and it's just a cop-out to say that your mind tells you what to do and you can't help it. The truth is, you like what the streets offer (which is why you go), but you don't like the consequences (which is why you understand that "gang bangin' and stealing is stupid"). So now it's on you. If you go back to doing what you've been doing, then you are saying you understand the consequences and you're willing to accept them — meaning you know you'll end up back here, or worse. Not going back to your old life (and doing what you know you need to do, which is go to school) is harder to do, and requires more courage to stand up to old friends with a new determination, and only time will tell whether you have the courage and strength to do it. We're hoping the answer is yes.

Tired

Man, I'm tired of being on B1. Hella little kids talkin' hella stuff and they don't ever do nothing. Man, these kids don't know nothin'. They just think it's all fun and games until they get hit, man. I wish I was on B2 or B4. Them people is more mature than these little kids in here, so, yeah, I'm happy I'm getting out soon.

-Smiley B1

From The Beat: There is a lot of immaturity in the halls, Smiley, but what do you expect when you lock up teenage boys? They (including you) are still children in many ways. In fact, when you wish you were in B2 or B4 (instead of wishing you were in school or at home), it tells us that you should be focusing more of your energy on your own actions so that you can find ways to live in freedom without risking your life, or your health. Until you do that, it won't matter whether you're in B2 or B5. The only way to avoid being locked up with people who act the way you describe (and such people exist in every jail and prison in the country) is to avoid coming to places like this in the first place. We don't know if you believe in the Christian Bible or not, but there is a passage in it that reminds you to first look into the flaws in your own eyes before you pass judgment on the flaws in the eyes of others.

When I Get Out!

W'ass up, Beat? Man, when I get out, I'm going to my foster home and just chill. I'm going to be good this time, so I won't get kicked and run away from the house. So I'm going to the house, call my mom, see if I can have her come visit me and tell her I love her.

This time I'm going to try to stay out of trouble and go to school, 'cause I only have one year of high school left. Even though I still need to catch up on some credits, still I hope I graduate on time. So, yeah, hopefully I'll get picked by my foster home around this week because they making me wait too long wit' dat. I'm out.

-Smiley B1

From The Beat: You have a terrific attitude, Smiley. We hope it can carry you through this time. You know you can control yourself, because you've done it while you were in the hall, so just keep doing it. You're right to focus on your last year of school and graduating. Have you thought about what you want to do after high school? We hope you'll consider going to college, because we think college opens many doors. If The Beat can be of any help, don't hesitate to ask.

A Letter To My Grandchild

I would tell him to be good and stay outta trouble, don't get in trouble with the law. Stay in school and be the first in the fam bam to go to college and graduate, along as being successful in life.

Don't smoke, but if you do, don't smoke as much. And if you do, finish yo' homework first. Take care of yo' mama when she gets old. Especially me, too--spend more time with yo' family. Love you, grandchild.

-Chex B1

From The Beat: What a beautiful letter to your grandchild, Chex. But, why don't you read it over as if it were a letter to you from your grandfather, because it contains some terrific advice! Why don't you make become the first in your family get a college degree? What would study if you went to college? What would you like to do in life? If you go college and have a career, you can write a real letter to your real grandchild some day urging him or her to become the first senator, CEO of a company, or President of the USA in your family!

When It's Cold Outside

When it's cold outside I go in the house and smoke some weed, play the game or just go to sleep and call it a day, ya heard.

-Anthony B2

From The Beat: Is that how you want to live the rest of your life, Anthony? Stay home, smoke weed, and play video games? Sounds hella boring to us.

When It's Cold Outside

Me and a few of the homies go to my house out of the 'hood and have a contest who can blow the fattest clouds. But if I don't feel like any company I go with a chop to the face and talk to my main girl and talk to her for the rest of the night.

-Calvin B2

From The Beat: Can you tell us why you sometimes want company, but other times you don't? When do you feel like just being with your girl and not your homies? When you're locked up, you're not blowing any clouds, so how do you comfort yourself inside?

When I Open My Eyes

I see walls with shhh all over them and a door that only opens when someone on the other side uses a key to open the door. This every day ain't me, so when I get out I'ma do all I can to stay out, 'cause when I open my eyes I want to see white walls, family, and no locked doors.

-Gbb B2

From The Beat: What are you going to do to make that happen Marques? We hear so many people in and out of the halls say, "I ain't never coming back," and they end up coming right back. So what are you going to do different than the last time?

Don't Do What You Don't Want Done To Your Mom

When I get out, I will not come back to YGC. I will not hang with people who will get me in trouble, like break in people cars or people houses, no fighting other people. Go to school, get a job, don't steal from people, because you don't want people to steal from your mom.

-Andre B1

From The Beat: That's very wise, Andre. If everybody operated on the principle that they would not to anything to anyone that they wouldn't want done to their own mothers, we could probably close down juvenile hall! We admire your determination not to come back, but what's your plan for success on the outs?

Happier If No Money Worries

If I never had to worry about money, I would get my education 'cause then I wouldn't be worried about it, I would have my mind on something else. I think about getting away to do fun things, I would be in way less trouble. I would think about more positive things. Probably would be thinking when the next biggest celebrity comes up with the greatest album. Or when the next cleanest shoes, or clothing will come out. Matter of fact I might be spending a lot more time with my family.

Really though, I might enjoy not having to always think or worry about making my money. Wouldn't have as much beef or fights/violence because of people that wants my money. I actually think I might be a more happier person.

-Chex B1

From The Beat: We think you're right about having a happier life if money wasn't a concern. But since we all do have to worry about money, one way or another, what can you do now to bring yourself more happiness and less beef? In the long run, what do you think your best path towards making a life for yourself (including making a living economically) is? We think the key is in getting your education. Do you agree?

Money

If I didn't have to worry about money, I would try to help my family.

-Tru B

From The Beat: It's a cinch you're not able to help your family as long as you're locked up, Ballard. So the first order of business is to get yourself out of here and find a way to stay out of the system. Then you can concentrate on helping your family!

Back

Man this Lil' Junk back in this place again, but it's cool. I'm about to beat this punk-ass case and be right back on the block. Man, I'm in here going through it.

-Lil' Junk B1

From The Beat: Lil' Junk, if you intend to go right back to the block and do whatever brought you into juvy this time, why don't you just stay inside now? If you don't plan to change anything, then you can expect the system not to change any of its responses, either. So when you get back to the block, what will it be for you?

Bad Things Will Happen In The Game

Hey, this is Lil' Sneaky talking to you about the game. If you're in the game, you better hope to die. If you're in the game, you better hope to get shot, stabbed, and die at a young age. In the game you better know that you will be in and out of jail. In the game you will be on your way to the pen.

And for all you young people, don't get in the game, because you're living your life too fast. Look at me, getting shot and stabbed. I thank God that I haven't died yet. So let me tell you, please, all you young people, do not get in the game.

-Lil' Sneaky B1

From The Beat: Even though no one hopes to die, we agree with you that staying in the game is a prescription for early death or contributing to your own enslavement. But it's not what you say that matters, it's what you do. If you give such excellent advice without taking it yourself, why should anyone else listen? Or, are you following your own advice? Are you getting out of the game? What's your plan for staying free when you get out of here?

To My Grandson

Dear Grandson:

I'm writing you this letter to first of all let you know that you can talk to me about any problems you may have, because believe me, I have been through it all. Life is about goods and bads. Sometimes it's more bad than good, and when good comes it's real good. So if you have any questions on life, you ask. I will always be here for you, not just as your grandfather, but as a good friend.

-Cesar B4

From The Beat: Very touching, very sweet. Just make sure that you live your life in a way that leads to a long life (and grandchildren) for you, because you will obviously be a fine grandfather. If you had received a letter like this from your own grandfather (or someone like him), would it have made a difference in your life?

Take Your Responsibility

What's up? This ya boy D-Skirts from Log Cabin Ranch and I just want to tell y'all to take care of ya'self when you step out of this system. It's time to start stepping up to the plate and taking care of your responsibilities. So that's all for right now. That's just some food for thoughts.

-D-Skirts B4

From The Beat: We hope you've already started taking care of your responsibilities. This advice is too good to wait to begin. But can you tell us some examples of "stepping up to the plate?"

My Life In YGC

My life in YGC is frustrating in here just wasting time, waiting. Waiting to get sent away from the city. The only amount of money I could bring is fifty. I know a lot of people would say forget that, but I ain't tripping 'cause I know one day I'll be back

-Pinguino B2

From The Beat: When you say, you'll be back, do you mean you'll be back in the city or the halls? We hope you mean in the city, because we sure don't want to see you back in the halls again. Just don't forget, only a crazy man expects to do the same things without facing the same consequences...

Dear Life...

If Cito could change earlier parts or plays in his life, he wouldn't. Why? Because I learn from things I do or did wrong. Over all, it's still not too late to do anything. Life is cool, if I want it to be. Cito out.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: You're right, we all learn by our mistakes. So give us a few examples of the things you've learned from yours... Your past can explain many decisions, even the "bad" ones that brought you here. But at the same time, understanding why you do something does not relieve you of the consequences of whatever you do. So, of course it's "still not too late to do anything." You are the master of your own fate, Cito. We know what we'd like your future to be, but we don't know what you'd like it to be, or how you plan to get there from here.

The System Ain't Shhh!

Damn family, the system ain't shhh. I been on probation for a minute doing good and bad. When I was doing bad they wasn't doing nothing to your boy but threatenin' to lock me up. But I started to do good they kept me at court and said I violated probation and now trying to send me to the Ranch. I'm gonna knock my time out, get out and thug it back to the block off probation.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Getting out and thugging it back to the block is a sure sign that the system isn't working — because you will soon be back trapped inside it! We understand that you are frustrated, but is that a good enough reason to set yourself up for failure? The system is what it is — and it is entirely capable of keeping you locked up every time you give it the opportunity.

When It's Cold Outside, How Do You Stay Warm?

It's hard because I'm in here and my big homie got stabbed. I heard my own homies are trying to take my big sister's life out, and when I get out I got to find out if it's true. So it's a real messed up shhh when it goes down. I do some bad things but I don't never go to da block because it's boring and all we do is the same old-ass shhh every day.

-Jay B2

From The Beat: Maybe it's time you changed other things about your life, Jay, as well as not going to the block. You know that if you get into the beef you've described here, you will quickly be back in lock-up... If something more serious doesn't happen. Don't make childish decisions that will affect every day of your future life.

Learning Other Ways

All Cito wants to say today is that Cito has done wrong. What's done is done. All I can do is think before I act, and that there's other ways to do things. That doesn't mean that I can't smoke my purple and drink my dranks. I love trees.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Real talk. What is done is done and gone with the wind. If you've truly learned the valuable lesson to think of consequences before acting, then it was done for a good cause. If Cito decides he wants to smoke and drink, that's on him (we couldn't resist giving you a 3rd person response...). Just be sure to know and be willing to accept the consequences for anything that might result from being drunk and high.

Back In B2

What it do, Beat? It's ya boy Stoffice back in B2. Man, I'm really hot I'm in here. I'm trying to get back to the turf ASAP. The homies need me. Right now it's hard times. When I get out this time I'm getting money and doing my programs.

-Stoffice B2

From The Beat: You mean when you get out, you are back to doing the same old things to end back up in the halls? Your homies are not the only ones that need you, Stoffice. How many more times do you want to start writing a piece with the terrible words, "I'm back"?

That Must Be Nice

If I had a penny for every time I was feeling sad, disappointed, mistrusted, and lonely, I would be the richest man in the world.

I try to tell my family what I'm feeling, but they act like I'm not even there, so I act out in ways that always have me in a mess. I turn to drugs to make the feelings that I'm feeling. Most of the time it works, but when it do not work I feel worse than I was sober.

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: You wrote that you "turn to drugs to make the feelings" that you feel, and we think that's true of many young people today. You really haven't allowed yourself to feel your own feelings because you are manufacturing feelings with drugs. And even when we can understand why you'd want to make your own feelings to avoid feeling some things, like loneliness and pain, in the end the manufactured feelings dry up, and you are left with the same old hurt and loneliness. It's very sad that your family doesn't give you the attention you deserve, but we hope you'll try to talk with them and make them listen to you (and you listen to them) because as hard as that might be for all of you, it will be easier than dealing with the long-term consequences of drugging yourself into phony feelings.

What My Life's Like

I've been thru rough times,

In this life I live,

I've been thru getting shot at and everything, But it's because of the life I chose, and that life is gang bangin',

No set trippin',

I got in tha game when

I found out how mah cousin

Got killed,

So from that point on

I started kickin' it

Then that's how it all started

Tryna get revenge for mah cousin.

And I'm still running strong in the game

For him

-Kidd B2

From the Beat: Yeah, we can see how strong you're running... From your room to the head, from the head to your room, from your room to the dining room, from the dining room to your room... You must be tired from so much running... Your piece shows the love you have for your cousin, but it also tells us that you're putting yourself on a path to follow him. Is this really how you want things to be? If he could spend five minutes with you now, do you think he would advise you to risk God's most precious gift — life itself?

Murder In My Family

RIP Seany

Who was gunned down

He was 22 years old

Born in the 1980's

And died August 14th, 2002.

I learned not to play

Around the streets

Because you can get hurt

My relationship with

Sean was my uncle

My memories of them

Is being around me.

-Denael B1

From The Beat: Your uncle was loved by many, Denael, and many have written about with love, respect and true affection. The ongoing 'hood wars are taking a terrible and tragic toll on your generation, and all we can do is hope that you don't fall into the trap of thinking that it's time for payback. The cycle of "one of yours, then one of ours, then one of yours," — an eye for an eye — can only lead to what great thinkers like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., describe as a blind and toothless society. With the deadly game y'all are playing, it will be a blind, deaf and dead society! Why don't you write about your favorite memories of your uncle? We'd be happy to publish them for you in The Beat.

Dear Life

I've been in many situations where I almost died twice

Sometimes I don't give a damn about life or death

But then I take a deep breath and come back to reality check

Then my mind stop playing games with my vision and I wake up to suspense

And suddenly I wake up in cell #17 on a solid-ass bed

Just thinking about what kind of life I'll live on time ahead

Then I think about my little brother and sister and think about how I used to raise them

Next thing you know I'm waking up from thinking about bustin' heads crossin' my enemy lines through my eye lens

holla back at cha boy of your still livin for joy, your life's writer,

-Big Daddy Uce B4

From The Beat: We had to take out one line of this poem because it was too graphic a threat. But other than that, we like this poem. Keep thinking about your little brother and sister and just how much they need you with them to guide them through these dangerous times. Are you up for getting out and staying out so that you can be the big brother they need?

Don't Do It

I really regret doing what I did to get locked up. I shouldn't have stabbed that human being. I apologize. God forgive me for everything that I did wrong in the past. Please wash my sins away for good God so I don't end up in here again.

Beat readers, when you get out don't do a stupid crime to end up in the halls or the pen. You're basically throwing your life away. Think before you do something, and maybe you won't be locked up.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: We know that you sincerely regret doing what you did, Billy, and we also know that a sincere apology is the beginning of real change. So we believe you will follow your own excellent advice to other Beat readers to think before you act so that you'll never come back to a place like this again.

Miss You

I really miss my ex-girl. I was doing my work and my ex-girl popped up in my head. A tear fell from my face because I remembered all the hurt that she put me through. I still miss her I wish I could talk to her.

I also had good memories in my head when I was thinking about her like when we used to go to the movies and do our thang in the movies. I would get happy then sad.

I just wish she never would have done what she did to make me cry. Man I was really hurt when I made that phone call. When I got here it felt like she just got a gun and shot me.

I wanna get back with her. I know I'll regret it, but I just wanna be with her because she makes me hella happy when I'm with her. I used to feel hella good but now I feel like shhhh. What should I do?

-Billy B4

From The Beat: Love is a strange thing, Billy. It takes us to heaven and it throws us into hell — sometimes on the same day! We don't know what she did to you, or why she makes you feel so sad, but we understand why you're torn when you think about her. We can't tell you what to do, but we know that good things come to those who wait. So, just be yourself Billy, and one of these days a girl who recognizes quality when she sees it will find you.

Life is No Game

This life out here is no game. You have to really know the streets to survive out here. If you don't, yo' ass is dead. These gangbangers and thugs are looking for trouble to run into. They wanna hurt you or either kill you and that's real.

If you live in a 'hood or projects, get away from there. No matter where you go, you're gonna have a least one enemy around you and they looking for you. The 'hoods these days are dangerous. If you go to a 'hood that you don't belong in and that's yo' enemy's 'hood, yo' ass is grass. They gonna either whoop yo' ass really bad or kill you.

So just get out of the Bay Area. You will have enemies everywhere you go. Remember, there will always be a hater out there looking to clap you, so ninjas watch yo' back out there. Be safe. Late.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: We agree with your advice, Billy, but it's easier said than done. How do you just pick up and move to a new place or new city? Will you be able to find a place without enemies when you get out?

Why Do You Cheat On Us?

This question goes to all the girls that cheat on men. Why do you have to hurt our feelings? We do everything in our power to love, protect and take care of you, but you still treat us like dogs. So why do you love to hurt us and make us cry? Why?

-Billy B4

From The Beat: We believe that you do what is in your power to protect and take care of your girlfriends, Billy, but not all men are like you. In fact, if you listen to the conversations all around you, you will understand why many girls do not trust boys. Lots of boys act like dogs, so lots of women treat them like dogs. Still, we feel sure that you will find the right woman who will treat you like the gentleman you are.

Interview With A Young G

BWI: How long you been here?

J-Gutta: Six months

BWI: How many times?

J-G: I been here like nine

BWI: Why? Was there something that could help keep you out?

J-G: I came into the system when I just turned 16, and I never been out. I been to group homes but I always run.

BWI: Why do you run?

J-G: Because I need to be free.

BWI: But you always get caught don't you?

J-G: Yeah, but that's 'cause I go home.

BWI: Right... You go home and you get caught. How long will that go on?

J-G: It's over now. They trying to send me to YA because I always run.

BWI: What are you doing to prepare yourself for that?

J-G: do pushups do get my yokes up.

BWI: Are you also preparing your mind?

J-G: Yeah. I'm reading the dictionary to get my vocabulary up.

BWI: What do you do?

J-G: I write down all the words I don't understand, then I try to use those words in a sentence.

BWI: What's the most recent word you've learned?

J-G: Rejuvenated.

BWI: Use it in a sentence.

J-G: I was rejuvenated when I left the Ranch.

BWI: What was so bad about the Ranch?

J-G: The right-ups! You get dead time for anything, like contraband, a pen, porno, fighting...

BWI: Did you fight?

J-G: Yeah, a dude threw my basketball to I had to get on him. That's why I'm here now. They kicked me out. I've got a one-way ticket to YA.

BWI: Are you thinking beyond the Y?

J-G: Yeah, I'm going to get a job.

BWI: What kind of job do you want?

J-G: I'll work for Foot Locker.

BWI: Well it's time to call this program. So thanks for talking to me

J-G: Two thumbs up.

-J-Gutta B5

From The Beat: We're sorry you're on your way to the "Y," J-G, but at least you are thinking past it to what you want to do when you are once again a free man. Our one word of advice is for you to try to avoid the fights that are quick to jump off there. It is a difficult thing to do, but it is a trap to add more time, so it's worth the effort. Good luck.

Love

I thought I found love, but it was just a bug
I thought I found love, man all I want is a hug

I wanna find love so I can be glad,
but all it's doing is making me sad
I want a faithful girl that won't try to bug me for a diamond or pearl

Why do girls love to hurt me
Man I'm tired of these girls trying to blurrp me and smurk me

Why does ma life have to be like this... is every girl dirty

Man I'm tired of getting played
How much longer do I have to suffer, tomorrow and today

-Billy B4

From The Beat: Well, Billy, we're back to your favorite subject, love! All we can say is that just because you've had bad luck in the past doesn't mean you'll always have bad luck. You can protect yourself against those bugs, but you can't protect yourself against a bruised heart. Just remember that the love you give is the love that you'll get.

On The Block

What's up Beat? My name is Lil' C and I miss my block. I been locked up for a year. I have not been on the block and at home, but it's coo'. They can't hold me for life. So I want everybody no the block be cool. You will end up here with me, so stay down.

-Lil' C B5

From The Beat: We feel your frustration with being away from home and homies for so long. But, Lil' C, if all you can think about is getting back to the block, you are not using this time to your advantage. We wish you would start making plans for yourself that will keep you off the block, that will keep you busy going to school, that will give you a chance to breathe some free air which you have been denied for so long. You don't want to come back here, or go some place worse!

My Life's Messed Up

Dear life, why is my life so messed up? Nothing seems to go right for me. Nothing good happens to me. I do a lot of good and nothing never comes back in return. This is Dave from B5 sayin' thanks life for being good to me.

-Dave B5

From The Beat: When you examine everything about your life, is it really true that nothing good happens to you? When you say you do a lot of good, what do you have in mind? What good things are you hoping for? What else can you do to make it more likely that good things will happen to you?

Wish I Was Home

I am in pain right now because I really miss my family. I hate myself for being in here. I really regret doing my crime and getting locked up like a dog.

I cry at night because I miss my family. They got my back 100 percent. I just wish I could have controlled my anger. I don't like being locked up. It hurts me so bad 'cause I could be doing something constructive right now.

I see my family when they come and visit me and talk to them on the phone. I feel sad to know that they are depressed and sad.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: You don't need to hate yourself, Billy, you just need to check yourself. Regretting your crime and wishing to control your anger are the beginning of change. Yes, you could be doing something constructive on the outs, and we hope you soon are. But in the meantime, you are doing something constructive right here, which is writing excellent advice, and just being a good person!

Fat Thugs Eat

My name is Fat Thug. Where I come from me and my thugs eat. I'm still locked up in B-5. I just can't wait to be with my family and my lil' cousins. Holler at yo' boy Fat Thug.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: Is that all your thugs do is eat? What do you plan to do with your family and lil' cousins when you get home?

I Miss My Life

Dear life, I miss my life. Being in YGC keeps you from everything. Mostly from your loved ones. When I came in here I didn't get to tell the ones I love that I loved them. Being in here changed my life.

Getting locked up ain't fun. This sucks. It ain't worth staying in here over some bullshh. Being in here sucks because you have no freedom. I miss my life when I can get up and go to the bathroom whenever I want. When you in here you miss dem lil' things. The food is nasty. You be missing your mom's cooking. People saying being in YGC is going to make you look cool. Well I'd rather not be cool then. That's all I gotta say. I'm out!

-Jennifer GU

From The Beat: We definitely agree with you that we'd rather be free than "cool" inside a lock-up! Why do you think people say being in YGC makes you look cool? When you say coming to YGC has changed your life, do you mean that you plan to change some things about the way you live your life so that you won't ever have to come here again? If that's what you're saying, then maybe coming here was an important wake-up call for you. What have you learned from this experience, and how will you apply those lessons to your life?

Thinkin' Of You

Damn, baby girl, I miss you so much. I can't get you off my mind since you left to a group home in Colorado. You kept me smiling and laughing every day with your jokes. You kept me up when I was feelin' down.

Girl, why you leave me? I really want you by my side, baby girl. I'ma wait six months. Don't worry about that. I cry every time I think of you and I'm wondering why. Is it because I'm really feelin' you, or is it because you a good friend? Don't trip, baby girl, I'll be there with you one day. Love always, yo' girl.

-Lil' Cheesecake GU

From The Beat: How can the two of you help each other to avoid the situations that lead to one or both of you being put behind bars and separated? Are you planning to change anything about your life so that you don't have to experience this again? Are you encouraging Baby Girl to make the changes she needs to make, or are you both committed to the lives you've been leading — and therefore to the consequences you're now both experiencing?

Thinkin' Of You

Damn man, I'm here in YGC thinkin' all about you, wishin' I was with you, baby. You got me goin' crazy. You told me you going to wait and I know you ain't lyin, 'cause when I called my friend she and yo' cousin told me that you ain't going out.

You bein' lazy and I'm wondering why. Is it because you missin' me? Is it because you can't live without me? Is it because you can't hold me tight? Can you please tell me why? Man, I don't want you stressing. Wait baby, I'll be back. Give me three more weeks and I'll be by yo' side till the day I die. Love always.

-Lil' Shadow GU

From The Beat: You'll be out soon, Lil' Shadow, but the only way you'll be by your lover's side till the day you die is if you don't come back here! Otherwise, it's just words of love, and words are just words. If this young man is good for you, he will help you lead a life free of prison and negativity. But in the end, it's not up to him, but it is up to you.

Dear Life

I hope I can get out of here as soon as possible so I could get my life back. I feel like when I'm here, I've lost everything. I've lost myself, my family, my school, and everything I love and cared about.

Ever since I've got in here I lost everything, and now I don't even know how it feels like to have a life. So far, I've made the biggest mistake of my life.

I miss being out in the world. I miss my own bed, my dog and cats. I missed out on everything. I wasn't even able to spend Mother's Day with my mom. I regret what I did.

This is the worst thing that ever happened in my life so far. I miss using conditioner on my hair, I miss walking with my friends after school, I miss seeing my parents, and the worst of all, I'm going to miss my brother's graduation. I won't even be able to see my brother walk past the stage.

I really hope I get out. If I have to stay here for another month or two, I'm gonna die! I really miss holding my kitties, walking my dog and I really miss my family.

-No Name GU

From The Beat: This may be the worst thing that has happened to you so far, but if it makes you see what you have to change about your life to avoid consequences like this, then maybe it is worth it. You now see clearly that some consequences can't be undone, like missing your brother's graduation. But we hope you also see that your future is in your own hands. When you get out of this situation (and you will), don't give the system any reason to take you from those you love; make the personal sacrifices necessary to live in freedom (giving up some things that you're now doing). Just what are you willing to stop doing for the sake of attending a brother's graduation, holding your pet kitties, walking your dog, and especially being with your family?

All Twisted

Things in my life is all twisted. One day you look up, things are going all good; then something just messes you all up. I don't even know what it is that I'm doing wrong. I always try to be at my best and something just goes wrong.

I tried talking to somebody. I don't know if that was the right thing to do or what, 'cause everybody seems to act like they care. But it's just certain things you just got to share. Things that I do, I don't even know if that's the right thing or the wrong. But I guess the places I end up tell it all. I don't mean to mess up but I don't think fast enough.

-Jacqueela GU

From The Beat: It's not easy to make the right choices, Jacqueela. It's good that you are communicating your thoughts to someone. It's understandable that you are cautious about who to talk to, but our experience tells us that it's worth the effort. We just want to remind you that you don't yet know all the places you'll end up because you're far too young to have "ended up" anywhere yet. Give yourself some time and some care, and you could end up in college surprising yourself.

Dear Life

You been treating me all right, but sometimes I just get tired of the stuff that you put me through. Sometimes I put it in the air 'cause I'm too depressed, or I just got too much stuff on my mind and I'm trying to relax.

I mean, I try to do some other stuff instead, like study or reading, but who likes doing that anyways? I get high as a kite because I'm trying to get on with my life flowing in the sky. Just relax, but there's always somebody to mess it up for me.

But you know, I got to keep my head up and dirt and the haters off my shoulder. My mom always told me there's no friends in life. I'm just another typical guy who's trying to make it in this life.

-Carlos B4

From The Beat: We don't think we agree with your mom when she says there are no friends in this life. Of course, many people cannot be trusted, but that is not true of everyone, and we think finding a good friend to trust is both achievable and worth doing. We understand why you would want to medicate your depression by smoking, but if you always turn to marijuana, you'll never look at your problems square in the face and deal with them. And what do you mean when you ask who likes to read? We like to read, and we bet if you had something that truly interested you, you'd like reading it too. So, what do you like? Maybe we can recommend a book.

I Miss You

I know you ain't going to get this 'cause you ain't in here, but all I got to say is that I miss you and love you no matter what they say or do to try to break us apart. Thanks for being there for me.

-Lil' Kayla GU

From The Beat: We don't know who you are addressing, or who "they" are that are trying to break you apart, but it would make for an interesting piece to know these things. Are those who want to break you apart doing it because they don't like who you've chosen or because they just think you're too young for a serious relationship? (R.S. We had to omit your dedication as inappropriate communication between units.)

I Talk To My Sister

When times get hard for me, I talk to my sister about my problems. But lately I haven't been talking to anybody about my problems so I got so much build up in me. I been trying to talk to her about my problems, but every time I try, she tries to compare me to somebody I don't even know. I got so much anger built up in me that when I go to my room I start to plot against other people.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: Sometimes barriers grow between sisters or brothers and for a while they find it difficult to communicate. Our bet is that this situation will pass, and that you and your sister will once again be able to talk freely and constructively together. But if not, is there someone else you can talk to? Does writing help you when you are filled with anger? One way to "plot against other people" safely is to write stories (fiction) where you "create" the characters, and then you can do whatever you want to them legally (since it's only a story...) We get a lot of our anger and aggression out that way, and it keeps us out of a lot of trouble we might otherwise get into...

I Need To Get Outta Here

W'at it do the Beat? Dis Princess still up in here waiting for my PO to come back on vacation so I can get up out of here. She playin' wit' my emotions for real. I was supposed get out of here last month. But my PO got me sittin' in this place for four months now and I got two more months to go, but one month if I'm lucky. These messy females driving me crazy. I need to get out of here.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: You've been in here for a minute, Princess. Your PO may have something to do with that, but ultimately you know it's on you. Your PO couldn't play with your emotions if you never gave the system a reason to assign you a PO in the first place. Have you learned what you need to learn to stay out of this place you hate so much? What lessons have you learned?

'Hood Stuff

I think that people should be able to stay on the outs for a long time so they can make something with his/her life. Me, I found out the hard way because this is my 9th time coming to the halls for the same shhh because I did the wrong shhh.

Me, I will keep it real. I live in the 'hood and I do 'hood shhh and that will not change because that is not me. I do not like what I do but I will change someday.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: Well, we'll keep it real with you too: unless you make that change you say will happen one day, then you can be sure the 9th time allowing yourself to become a slave will not be the last time. Maybe you've grown to like lock-up, because you know the consequences of your behavior, yet you keep doing it. When are you going to realize that people only get so many chances until the judge gets fed up and sends you somewhere you really don't want to be? We know change is hard, but spending so much time locked up with strangers telling you what to do can't be easy.

A Real Ninja

I am a real ninja. Everybody that judge me is wrong. I am strong on the outside but weak on the inside. I write what I feel 'cause I feel what I write. Sometimes I go crazy in my head. I don't know what's real sometimes.

What a ninja supposed to do when he can't afford them new pair of shoes, rob that man, mob that man... that's all I know to do. I was born with hustle in my blood. But my clothes was picked from the mud if you know what I mean. I try to stay off da corner so I don't gotta sell dat ice cream. All I can tell myself is don't cry, stay alive.

-The Wizard B2

From The Beat: Hustle might be in your family's blood, but that doesn't mean that you have to live that lifestyle. There are many other people out there in worse situations than you who choose not to rob, not to mob — and maybe not to wear that new pair of shoes they can't afford. What do you think is making you feel crazy in your head? We think it's because you cannot square your lifestyle with your moral beliefs, and every time you commit a crime, it pulls you farther from what you know of who you are. And that makes you crazy. We don't think you're as weak on the inside as you believe you are, because to express that openly requires strength, not weakness. The question is, how will you put that strength to your own use so that you don't go crazy? What feelings do you have when you experience this? What do you do when you find yourself going crazy? What's the best strategy for you to stay alive? Is it going back to the block, or something else?

The First Time I Popped A Pill

The first time I popped two pills and I was on the block straight trippin'. And I had a warrant. And these police that knew me said, "Come here!" And I said, "Eff you! You have to catch me!" and I started to run. But they caught me. I'm out.

-Menace B2

From The Beat: What does that tell you about being aware of your surroundings when you're tripping off E? Have you popped any pills since that one time?

Fiending For A Cigarette

Been here April 7th court on June 9th

I keep telling myself that's a hype

I always pray every night

Asking God please be there for me, don't want to fight

I really can't wait until I get out

The first thing I will do is put a 'port in my mouth.

-Edwin B2

From The Beat: What do you want God to do for you? How do you know He is not already there for you — and that it's part of His plan to have you here instead of on the street? Your freedom is in your hands. You may not like what you have to do to preserve it, but the choice will be yours. No one can lay out your future for you but you.

Hello Again

Hello again, Beat. I'm back in the halls yet again. I was only out for like a month and a half, man. Damn, that's sad. The reason I'm mad about it is because I'm in here for somebody else. I associated myself with the wrong people and let myself get caught up for something that someone else did. I know who it was, but I ain't finna snitch.

I just want to say one thing to everybody out there. You gotta pick and choose who you associate yourself with, because if you tryna do good but you around the wrong people, they gone bring you down and put you in a situation you don't want to be in... just like my dumb ass. One love.

-Young Quis B1

From The Beat: You're only a "dumb ass" if you don't learn from your mistakes. We think you have learned a number of valuable lessons and time will tell if you apply those lessons to your life and prove that you're no dumb ass! We admire you for taking the fall for someone else, but we'd admire you even more if you never got yourself into that situation to begin with.

A Life

I have been on the outs and in the in too. I'm trying to live life the way people and my family said life is supposed to be like. I see my life is not the way people would like to live, but I like to say that it's not easy to live good and it's not to live in jail so that why is you should choose the best life you can because it'll help you out in the long run.

-Moe Money B4

From The Beat: We hope your encouragement to choose the best life you can includes finishing school, because that is a huge key to a better future. We also hope that you can live by your excellent advice.

Staying Warm With Chemicals

The way I stay warm is going to the corner store and get a Hennessy Privilege or Baccardi and hop in the scraper and scrape the town blowing big 'dro with the young homies doing what we do.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Your description of "doing what you do" obviously is what leads you back to this cold place. So how effective is your "get warm" strategy? But then, some people do feel warm and comfortable locked up here. Maybe you do, too.

Freedom

I thought I had freedom in my past

I thought someone put a gun to my head and said blast

My family is disappointed and sad; I wish I hadn't messed

up Now that I'm locked up, I'm getting bad luck

I wish I could have talked things out

And maybe this situation would have worked out

I'm struggling in this little box

Staring at these prison socks

Layin' in bed

Wishing I wouldn't have done things that I said.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: The importance of wishing for a different past is in how those wishes will help you gain a better future. Nothing can change the past. We all have to live with our mistakes — and we all make them. So our advice is for you to stop beating yourself up for things that you cannot change (the past), and start thinking more about how you will negotiate your future, so that you never have to write sad poems like this from behind four walls again.

Still Wasting Time

I'm still in this place called the halls, doing the same thing every day, every week, when I could be out doing different things, doing things that I want to do, being with my fam bams, my girl and the homies, smoking and drinking. But instead I'm wasting my life doin' the same stuff and being locked up.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: If you are only thinking about smoking and drinking with your homies and girls, then you're absolutely right — you are wasting time. But that's not because you're here, it's because you haven't learned to use your time well, whether you're locked up or not. Life is not all fun and games, but requires some sacrifices in order to provide for a better future. If you don't start thinking about your own future, including getting your education, then it's a good bet you'll be wasting a lot more time on both sides of the walls.

Staying Warm

When it's cold on the outside, how do I stay warm? I stay in the house and play the games, or I go to my girl house an' talk about my son. I hope you like this.

-Lil' C B5

From The Beat: Does talking to your girl about your son make you feel warm inside? How old is your son? What's his name? How are you going to guide him away from the life that leads to lock-ups?

When It's Cold

When it's cold outside I go in the house and smoke some purp. Then after I smoke I go downstairs and eat hella food. My grandmother always say, "Boy, you been smoking them purples." And I always say no. Then she always say, "Boy, quit lying."

I also play my Play Station 2. Then I call some of my homies over, then we all play the game and smoke and then after a while we all be knocked out. Then grams come up there flashing.

-Lgb B2

From The Beat: When it's "cold" outside, what do you do in the halls? Do you sit in your cell and do nothing, or do you do something to occupy yourself — pick up a book, educate yourself, write? Them purples aren't going to get you a future, and can interfere with the education you must have to give you that future. Think about that.

I Miss You

What's up Beat? It's me again. How is everybody? I hope good out there. In here some shhh going on. I be thinking about getting out of here and going back to school and getting a job.

-Lil C B5

From The Beat: Now, that's what we're talking about, Lil' C. What kind of job are you thinking about getting? How far did you go in school? We hope you get as much education as you can, because it's a key to staying free.

My Friend, Carmen

There's this girl, Carmen, who I'm locked up with. She's my homie. She is tall, slender, pretty, and from Oakland. She was born in front of her grandma's house, in an ambulance in Oakland. She's going to be 15, on August 1st. We're both Leos and have pimpin' attitudes.

Me and Carmen used to hate each other, 'cause one night in front of her house, I was being hella loud and she flipped out, called me a hoe, and threatened to kick my ass. Then she got locked up, we bonded, and now we're homies! It's funny how that works, huh? There's a lesson for today.

-Heather

From The Beat: It is amazing how your enemy can become your friend. Why don't you write some more for The Beat about how she became your homiegirl? Can Carmen and you share the secrets of how you two overcame your rivalry to become homies with The Beat? Maybe what you write will help others who read it to slow down or stop any mess. We hope so. Thanks for the message.

Sick Of Being Locked Up

I've been here sooo many times. I'm sick of it. This will be the last time. Hopefully, that's it.

-Ariana

From The Beat: Now that you have some time to kick back and just think, can you figure out what's really wrong, that's causing you to mess up and get locked up so you can plan accordingly how to make it?

Put On A Jacket!

When it's cold outside
Metaphorically speaking

I put a jacket on

When it's really cold

I find a hussle

I mean, I know it's not the best thing to do

With no job and no money

I gotta get warm

I pull a ski mask down

And in a few minutes

Turn my life around

I ain't digging ditches

But I'm putting misses

On the ground

Snatch a purse

And disburse to my block

Then look for the worth

Of the nurse

I just robbed

I know it ain't right

But I can't say it's wrong

Now I'm living a thug life

'Til the day that I'm gone

I still ain't warm

'Cause it's cloudy, not sunny

And I'm still on a lifelong mission

For my money

-Timbalias

From The Beat: You know that as long as you tell yourself "It ain't wrong," to mug women for their purses, you're not going to get a real job to earn the cash you need, you're going to keep robbing ladies you assume are weaker than you are. Who are you kidding? This track you are on will wash you in the end!

I Wish

I wish I told you how I feel in every single way. I wish you were by my side at all times. I wish I can take everything back. But ever since you left, my world has become dark with a mourning black.

-Santiago

From The Beat: You don't write whom this beautiful, sad piece is written for or about, but being incarcerated can tend to line up the priorities of everyone inside. Has this happened to you? You start to know just who/what means tons to you and what in your life is nonsense or destructive. Since you now know you really care deeply about this person, why don't you write him/her? Maybe this person will write you back, and who knows what will happen?

Message To My People

I want all the people to stop doing stupid stuff, to stop going to MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall) and to stop selling drugs on the street. I want to say that all my people should stay out of trouble.

-Santiago

From The Beat: You're giving terrific advice to all your readers. Did you learn this wisdom in the halls or did you somehow learn it on your own? When you're free again, will you remember these wise words and follow them yourself?

Life In The Streets Can Be Cold

Life in the streets could be really cold

But I hold my head up and tryna to be bold

It might seem that shhh don't affect me

'Cause I pray to the Lord and ask Him to protect me

Ninjas in these streets try an' test me

I gotta lot of pride, so I give 'em the best

Grindin' on tha block day and night

Fighten' wit' ma sleep, but it's puttin' up a fight

-Nuke

From The Beat: For you, is life in the streets dangerous? We're sure your nights hanging out there are stressing you out. Have you ever seriously considered giving up your life out there and getting a real, legit job? Can you use those street skills you must have to get a job doing something that interests you, that will give you some cash, even if it's small money compared to what the streets can bring? At least you won't have to look over your shoulder all the time, worry about going to juvy, risking losing your life and/or hurting anyone else.

When I Get Down

When I get down, I get a pen and paper, and start to write what's on my mind. And usually dat's hella drama and death, because since I was two years old, at my dad's funeral, it's been death between my family and friends on da regular basis. All together I been to about twenty funerals and I'm only sixteen years old. Growing up around death and violence made me think to myself, "I gotta stay strapped at all time, so I won't get caught slippin'."

So at the age of a young teen, I got robbed and exactly the day after, I been packing heat wherever I went, because you never know when yo' time is. But before I go, I gotta quote: "Live life to the fullest, because the next day could be yo' day."

-Young Papermaker

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you are foolishly implying that you're still carrying a gun on the outs? If so, that can be real trouble on many levels. First, it's illegal, including juvy time, or worse. Second, even if you think, as you write, that you stay strapped to defend yourself, that may mean that anyone who considers you an enemy, is after you and knows you're carrying a weapon, may pursue you with a gun also, and shoot you. Third, you could panic in an ambiguous or tough situation, and shoot someone, even in self-defense, but use what a judge could consider unnecessary force. Forth, you could start relying on your gun to protect you and venture into dangerous places you'd never go if you didn't have your gun, because you had a false sense of security. Fifth, someday you may have righteous anger against someone, but use that gun to equalize what you consider an injustice. Six, you may just deliberately shoot someone someday, for a minor offense, and think you can justify it to yourself later. Maybe you can, maybe you can't, but your victim will be just as dead. So will you please reconsider carrying that gun for your own sake, as well as for any potential victim you could create?

The Mercedes, My Girl, And Me

Well, I want to talk about why I'm here, and I want to say sorry to my girl and her mom, and to my mom. Me and my girl were walking and we took a Mercedes. We got caught, like, an hour later.

I tried to tell my girl to not go, but she started to get mad, so I had to let her come. I don't care, I'll do my time, but the thing is--what's going to happen when I get home? I love my girl to death, but my mom wants me to get away from her.

-Payaso

From The Beat: You should be sorry not only to your girl but to all those people who care for you. What is it going to take to begin appreciating your freedom? How are you and your mom and your girl going to work things out when you get home?

Only God Can Judge Me

You can laugh all you want

'Cause I'm gone stunt

No matter how much you gloat

I'm still gone float

As you try to bring me down

The more I'll rise

I have faith in my soul

Can't you see it in my eyes?

I am a soldier of the Lord

For all my sins

I am thankfully forgiven

The harder you hate

The more I am driven

I'm going to succeed

With or without your glee

Start thinkin' 'bout you

And forget about me

It doesn't frustrate me, you see

Only God can judge me

-Karea

From The Beat: Who's trying to laugh at you, bring you down? Who's hatin' on you? You're right to defy whomever. But sometimes we all can learn from whoever is trying to mock us, be our enemies, if they have any insight into what's not cool with us. If you're doing something wrong that you'll have to ask the Lord to forgive, do you think maybe you shouldn't do it in the first place?

My Mom

My mom is everything to me, but I don't know why I still come back to this place, because I am getting out this Sunday. It's Mother's Day, when I'm supposed to be on the outs, buying something for her. But the thing is that I'm not supposed to waste her time picking me up when it's Mothers Day. Man, I'm just hella pissed off because I'm here. All right, then, peace.

-Marcos

From The Beat: Do you think that maybe the best Mother's Day gift your mom will ever get is to get her son back home, Marcos? We'll bet on it! She will most likely be delighted to be able to drive to juvy to get you! If you mean it, that you would like to help her, why don't you get a part-time job when you're free again, maybe buy some groceries, some gas for her car, take her out for a belated Mother's Day dinner at the restaurant of her choice?

It might seem that shhh don't affect me
'Cause I pray to the Lord
and ask Him to protect me

I Keep Comin' Back

I hate the hall, but I keep coming back, for what, I don't know. I could be doin' something better in life-playing ball. Some ninjas think they hard as hell, but haven't busted a grape, but you know how that go.

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: What would you be doing if you were home and free right now? Would you be going to school? Working at a job? Taking care of your brothers and sisters? Is one reason you keep coming back to juvy because your life on the outs isn't as challenging, productive, fun, as you wish it were or need it to be? If so, what can you do, that really interests you, to make your life as alive as you are?

One Day

One day
I'll walk free
To see the penitentiary
On fire
Walking away
From the insanity
Is gonna be
The greatest thing
The day is coming up
In fifteen days
Let Jah be praised

-Jesse

From The Beat: We hope by now you're already free, Jesse. The penitentiary may not be on fire, but at least you're probably no longer in juvy. What are you going to do to make sure you never have to see the inside again?

Success

I'm a get out in six days, so I'm not gonna be able to real this. I quit drug court and did ninety days in the hall. I have six more to go. It was either another placement in drug court or finishing my time and going home on I S O (Intensive supervised unit probation.) It's going to be tight when I get home.

-J

From The Beat: How are you doing with your drug situation? Do you think you need or do you want to enter a drug program? How are you managing in juvy without access to any drugs? What do you foresee as being your biggest obstacles when you're home again, that will cause your situation to be "tight"? How will you deal with those problems?

Same Shhh

It's hard these days to stay out. After doing over seventeen months over the past two years, and finally getting off probation, I couldn't stay out more than a month. Hopefully they don't try to smurk me hella much over here in Marin, like they was trying in San Mateo. But, ya, what's good? To all, yadadamean? But I be back.

-Perry

From The Beat: What happens to you on the outs? Do you smurk yourself? What is coming back to juvy over and over doing to your education, family, sense of continuity with your outside life, plans for the future? What's really wrong? Can you use some help? Guidance? Advice? If so, be sure to ask for it!

I could be doin' something better in life

SANTA CRUZ

How Am I Feeling?

Horrible. I'm facing prison, so I won't feel good until I get out. Right now I'm working on bail, so hopefully I will get out. I'm halfway there.

-Tried As An Adult

From The Beat: We have no pat answers for you. We hope you get the best outcome that's possible, considering your circumstances and yo uwake up and truly learn form your past choices.

One Day

One day I was singing a song
and had an idea. I would make my lover
the queen of kings. She was a book editor
who liked to sleep in the shadows at noon.
But she went too far. She stole a jewel
and attacked a flock of birds.

-Ben

From The Beat: This is an odd one Ben. We're not even sure why we like it, but we do.

I Don't Understand

I don't understand why I love you so much. With all my Corazon (heart)... I don't understand why I can't be with you right now and hold you all night. I don't understand why I keep coming back here. I don't understand a lot of things. But what I do understand, and know, is that I want to spend every single day of my life with you. I love you, and this child we might have created. I love you always.

-S

From The Beat: They say that to acknowledge one's ignorance is the beginning of wisdom. There's so much we will never understand because there is so much to try to understand. The world is very large and our lives are so brief and small. If we do the best we can, it will be good enough. We must say, though, that it is possible to understand your frequent return to juvy. But you must put a lot of effort and honesty into it, if you really want to know. Are you prepared to do that? With the possibility of a new life blooming inside you, it's time to get busy - don't you think?

The First Day

My life in juvenile hall has been what you could say is different. Your life is very structured in here. When you first get in here, you get showered down. It's called part of your intake, and you don't get to come out of your cell for 24 hours. You get one "non-collect" call per week. You wake up every day at six in the morning to sweep your room. Then you wait half an hour for the shower. After that.....

-Cody

From The Beat: We take it that this is not your usual lifestyle....

A Story

I was enjoying a cup of coffee because I wanted to get something off my chest. I looked up and saw a rainbow, full of eggs. Luckily I had a hat on, because the eggs were falling and hitting people in the head. The hat protected me from getting yolk in my hair. I was on private property when the eggs fell. The owner thought I'd thrown all those eggs and I had to clean them up. Afterwards, I got into my car and took off on the turnpike. I saw a rooster in the middle of the road. He was laying eggs.

-Abraham

From The Beat: Hey Abraham - there's something about this story that's hard to believe. Aren't you too young to drive a car?

Today

Well, I got released two days ago and I violated EMP, so I'm back. A lot of stuff has happened today. First off, I spread my dad's ashes. It was kinda hard, but something that needed to be done. I felt better after we did that.

I also met Tookie's family today. They came and talked to us. That was really nice that they'd take time out of their day to talk with us.

I don't know, but I should be going to my program next week, or maybe two. So that's chill.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: It sounds like one very huge day, emotionally huge day for you. We're glad you've shared it with us. And we wish you the very best at your program. Good luck to you.

Bike Story

When I got my first bike I didn't know how to ride it. I tried, but I kept on falling. So I kept on trying until I got it. And everyone kept laughing at me and making fun of me, so it got me very mad and made me want to learn how to do it very badly. I kept trying for a week. I finally got it.

-Noel

From The Beat: Persistence pays, they say. You learned it at a young age. Do you still have it? Do you stick with a problem until you've solved it?

Too Late

I was walking down a hill when I saw a girl and asked for her name. Her name was Tania.
I got her some yellow roses
but she said she would only be my friend.
Time passed and she started liking me.
By then it was too late.

-Juan

From The Beat: Sounds like your attraction lasted about as long as the roses.

A Shred Of Light

A shred of light is all I need
through these dark times behind bars.
It helps heal these tender scars.
Ashes of light is all I need.

-Anibal

From The Beat: You're not asking for much.

Still Waiting

What's up Beat?
How you doing?
I'm doing OK, I guess.
I'm still waiting for my rehab to open up.
I'm getting really tired of being here.
It's been a month.
I know that isn't much, but the lights never go out.
It gets annoying.
I've almost been in a fight, but they backed down.
I also broke my knuckle, and that's annoying.
I can't wait to go to rehab.

-Kyle

From The Beat: We hope you find rehab rewarding. Do we detect a "hot temper" lurking within you? If so, work on that, too, at rehab.

Prejudice

Well, I'm goin' to tell you about a time some people were prejudiced to me because I'm Mexican. While going to the mall some white people were looking at my cousin and me because someone stole something and we were just waking around the mall. They were following us around. When we got out of the mall, a 5-0 came up to us and was telling us that we stole something. They went to check us and our backpacks too. We told them to stop or we would sue them for saying that it was us. The 5-0 was a white man so he was hating on us.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Unfortunately, Oscar, we read lots of stories like this, and it always makes us ashamed for how some police treat the people they are supposed to protect and serve. Yes, this is a good example of racial prejudice. That 5-0 had no "probably cause" to stop you and search your backpacks, but when they have all the power, it's hard to resist.

Feeling Prejudiced

I have been prejudiced. When I went to Stanford Shopping Center all the white people kept looking at me. Also, when I went to Palo Alto I went to go eat at a restaurant. I heard people saying derogatory things about me. These are some examples of when I have been prejudiced.

-Frijolero

From The Beat: We're sorry you've experienced ignorant people with their ignorant prejudices. Of course, maybe all those white people were looking at you because they thought you looked hot...

When Should You Tell?

When should you tell?
Should you tell if you dropped the baby?
Some people say maybe.
When should you tell?
If you see someone have their personhood taken away.
Some people don't think twice of it.
When should you tell?
If someone is beaten.
Some people look on.
When should you tell?
If you see someone cry from the inside.
Some people wonder why and keep walkin' by.
When should you tell, and why?

-Midnight

From The Beat: This is another wonderful Midnight poem, filled with thoughtful questions and deeply moral answers. To be able to put these thoughts into poetic form — in about forty minutes — is nothing less than remarkable! We take our hats off to you.

Christmas

My favorite holiday is Christmas because I like to be with my family and friends. I like to give and receive gifts. We eat turkey and a lot of things. We also watch movies on TV. When my cousins come we play soccer in the back of the house with my uncles and auntie.

-Renzo

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of fun on Christmas. Who picks the movies you watch on TV? What's the best Christmas gift you ever gave? Who did you give it to?

Good Surprises And Bad Surprises

One of the good surprises I have ever had was when me, my mom, and my cousin was at Hollywood Video and my mom found \$20. It was heka funny because my cousin was like "Oooo, what you find?" And my mom was like, "Shut up, big mouth!" It was also a surprise because my mom spent the \$20 on me.

The worst surprise I have ever experienced was when I heard my cousin couldn't come back to East Palo Alto anymore. It was really surprising because he couldn't come back at all, not even on holidays. He couldn't come back because he got into some trouble with the law. But he still comes back anyway because he wants to see his family....duh!

-Bay Chick

From The Beat: What did your mom buy you that cost \$20? We don't know what your cousin did to get himself banned from EPA, but if he's coming back to see his family when he had a condition to stay away, he's risking a lot! We hope the law doesn't catch him (even by accident), because he'll be in a lot of trouble if they do.



Problems with Friends

Dear Beat,

Can you give advice to us? 'Cause I need help. Here's the deal. My friends are fighting and I don't want 'em to, so I can only talk to one of 'em. If I talk to the other two the first one won't talk to me. So yeah.

-In Serious Need of Help

From The Beat: This is a serious problem, but without knowing all the players and who thinks what about whom, we don't know how we can advise you. All we know is that it's the worst place to be in the middle of angry former friends. You say the one you talk to wouldn't keep talking to you if you spoke to the other two, but what about the other two? They know you're talking to the first girl, don't they? Do they still want to be friends with you? Is there anyone all of you like and respect that can bring you all together to talk about it without angry emotions? It may not result in all of you remaining friends, but at least you all can put everything out on the table and deal with it.

Surprise

To me a surprise is something that is good and bad. I like to be surprised by getting rewarded or just because I earned it. Some bad surprises are when things that you don't expect to happen actually happen. That's what's weird about them because surprises can be good or bad. But when people say surprise you mostly think that it is probably good.

One time that I had a surprise in my life is when my grandma came back. My grandma was gone a long time. Well, that's what it seemed like to me, so when I saw her again I was so happy because my grandma was one of my best friends. When she went away I felt very sad because I had missed her very much and I really was wondering where did she go. When was she coming back? So I had felt really, really happy when she finally had come back.

-Rina

From The Beat: This is a lovely surprise to get, Rina. Where did you grandmother go for all that time? Is she still with you now? Is she still one of your best friends? If seeing your grandmother again was one of the best surprises you ever got, what was one of the worst?

Favorite Holiday

My favorite holiday is Christmas because I get to hang out with my family and eat my mom's great cooking. Also because of the presents and because we all have fun and watch movies or watch whatever is on TV so we can get distracted. I also like the 4th of July because of all the fireworks that look really cool.

-I Smell Pan

From The Beat: Where do you spend your Christmas, at home or at the home of relatives? What's the best present you ever got? And what are some examples of your mom's great cooking?

Snitching

Snitching is bad and good
It's good to snitch inside the 'hood
They say if you snitch they'll call you a snitch
Snitching is bad and good

Living a life of no snitching
It's hard to say my life hasn't been itching
I wanted to tell to get out of hell
But my mouth was closed as if it weren't well
Snitching is bad and good

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: You are a heka fine writer, TT, and you have a mysterious quality to your writing! We don't know if you have secrets you're dying to tell (and maybe you should), or that if you knew something important, wild horses couldn't drag it out of you. You reinforce that mystery with the ambiguous refrain: "Snitching is bad and good."

Cinco de Mayo

Although I would love to say that my favorite holiday is either Christmas or Thanksgiving, it's not. My family isn't close so we never get together and celebrate like a close family. Instead I go on and do my own thing. So Cinco de Mayo is my favorite subject. I guess it's my favorite subject since it's a time when you go and do your own thing. I also represent what I am — Latina! The reason why I'm proud to be Latina is because it's a privilege. You got history and plus, look at us!

-Aylet

From The Beat: Indeed! But tell us, besides the history and the, "look-at-us" look, how do you represent who you are? How does your "own thing" represent you?

Prejudice

I've been a victim of prejudice when me and my mom went to Mervyns and one of the workers were following us. There was this white lady stealin' 'n dey didn't even see her. Dey was followin' us. And I'm not going to list mine 'cause everyone has one.

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: We agree that everyone is brought up hearing the prejudices of their parents which, unless they start thinking for themselves, will be absorbed and perpetuated. But if you have experienced prejudice against you (and what you've described is just that), then we hope you examine your own prejudices and realize they are just as wrong-headed as what you experienced.

Bored And Worried

Hey Beat. It's Wizzy. I'm worried 'cause people are lying to me. Remember when I wrote about the song "That's What Dreams Are Made Of?" I decided to write back about that. My problems have to do with boys and my friends. My friends want to help me but can't 'cause I can't trust them. So yeah, can you?

-Wizzy

From The Beat: We don't really know what kind of help you're looking for, Wizzy. Boys are always a problem at your age, so proceed with caution! Why can't you trust your friends?

Prejudice

This reminds me of when I went to the theaters and me and my cousin were wearing red and they must of thought we were in a gang. Then we knew that they were in a gang because they had blue on and their haircut. But we told them not to worry about it. Then we left to my cousin's house. Also racism because of what I wear or who I'm with or my skin.

-I Smell Pan

From The Beat: Did the gang in blue want to fight with you because you were wearing the other color? How did you convince them that you were not gang members? We're not sure what your experience with racism is, but we would be interested in reading about it.

Prejudice

I have had people be prejudiced to me but not something major. I think that everyone is somewhat prejudiced in them although mostly all people say they don't. In my family I don't really have them being prejudiced because of a race but the way someone lives or acts. Prejudice is something I'm against and try my hardest to prevent it on myself and others.

-Aylet

From The Beat: We're interested in your description of your family. You say they don't express racial prejudice, but they do express other kinds of prejudice. Can you give us some examples? Do you find yourself accepting the prejudices passed on to you from older family members, or do you try to think things out for yourself and come to your own conclusions?

Surprise

My best surprise was when I found \$400 while walking around East Palo Alto. I was hecka happy. I used it for me and my brother at Hoodstars. I bought some clothes and some customized belts.

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: That's a lot of money to find in the streets! If you had seen someone drop that kind of money, would you have given it back?

Damn!

Roses are red violets are blue
My ninja just died who's next to you
It came to me the blood that pouring
My ninja is dying my head is soaring
I called the police hoping they'll hurry
But my friend said I can't see, everything's blurry
It's been to years, wishing and thinking
What a surprise, he died yet still winking

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: We hope this is only a piece out of your imagination, and not something you actually experienced! But it is something that happens far too often, so we applaud you for writing such a graphic poem about it. We missed you in our final workshop, TT, so we want to take this opportunity to thank you for being one of the best and most regular contributors every week.

Prejudice

I have never been prejudiced because I don't like that kind of stuff. Sometimes I see prejudice by other people because I been walking through the streets. They been prejudiced to me when it's not true. Some people think that prejudice is nothing because they said that word doesn't exist. And I been telling them that's not true. Prejudice needs to be specific on how we said or how we pronounced.

-Lupe

From The Beat: What was the situation when you were the victim of prejudice? Do your parents carry any prejudices about other races or groups? Do you ever draw big conclusions about who groups of people ("they"), when you really don't know them, or you only have the experience of one individual?

Worst Ever!

I always liked this kid who's my friend. I guess he lied when he told me he loves me. I mean I hecka liked him and he asked me twice if I wanted to be his girlfriend. Both times I said yes.

Well, one day I was walking in line and he touched some girl's behind. I trusted him and he ruined that. I called him and told him that I heard a rumor that he touched her behind. He said that he just doesn't want anyone to know that he loves me. One week later, which was May 26, he touched another girl's behind. I knew that he'd never change.

I don't know why, I just still like him and I'm not sure if he likes me. What would you do Beat? I need help. Should I trust him? I'm not like the other girls who will get in his face and scream and slap him. So yeah. Any advice? Please Beat, I need help.

-In Pain

From The Beat: You know we can't give you good advice because we don't know him. But if we were in your situation, we would try to be as realistic as we can. We might still like him, but we wouldn't believe or trust him. Our guess is that he is telling other girls that he loves them, too, and what he really loves is something you've already described... We think we'd be content to have him as a friend, but not as a trusted boyfriend...

Calls And Rice Krispies

Rice Krispies taste good but they bring me memories. In the 7th grade I had a friend named Shamika who gave me her last Rice Krispies. I still have it and I don't have anything to call her or write. So if she reads this, thanks Shamika! I'll never forget you. Today, which is June 1, 2006, my friend who I love as more than a friend gave me his last Rice Krispies. I love him and he's always there for me.

-In Pain

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand this. Are we talking about the cereal, Rice Krispies? What do you mean by "her last Rice Krispies"? Why would they be her (or his) last? You can always get more RK. We think you may be talking about something else, but we don't know what it is. Can you enlighten us?

Big Surprise

My biggest surprise is when my friend fell down in garden class because he stepped on my backpack and then slipped down the ground. All my class was laughing but he didn't hurt himself.

-Renzo

From The Beat: Have you ever had an embarrassing fall like that, or done something that didn't really hurt but left you red with embarrassment?

If You Give A Mouse A Cookie

He'd want milk, then want to look in the mirror and get a haircut. He'd then want to clean it up and clean the whole house instead. He'd then want to sleep and go to bed. He'd want a story to read and want to draw a picture. He'd hang it on the fridge and get thirsty. He'd then want milk and it's back to wanting a cookie.

-Wizzy

From The Beat: You're the second EPA student to write about giving a cookie to a mouse in The Beat. This must be a funny cartoon, but we've never seen it. We know what happens when you give a mouse to a snake... is that like giving a cookie to a mouse?

My Dad

The best surprise I've ever had is when I met my dad because I really wanted to meet my dad. Now that I've met him I feel good because my mom and him are good friends, not like other parents that hate each other. They're cool together. It's just that my dad had another baby. I go with my dad every weekend and I stay with my mom Monday - Friday. My dad lives in Sunnyvale. But anyways I'm really happy that I met my dad.

The bad surprise was when I went to Mervyn's and stole some earrings when I had money. I guess I only did it for fun because I thought I wouldn't get caught. Actually I did. That was a big surprise. I got in so much trouble just before my birthday. When I could have just bought the earrings...

-Denise

From The Beat: We love both your examples, Denise. Of course, we love the fact that your dad is back in your life and that your mom and dad don't fight. How old were you when your dad walked out of your life? As for your "bad surprise" example, we like that you are willing to talk about it, even though it must embarrass you to admit that you stole something you could have paid for. We hope you learned some valuable lessons from that experience. Did you? Like what?

Like Whaa!

I have been prejudiced. One day my brother and I were at the store waiting in the line and white people came before us. And the checker told the white people to come in front of us. So we did not buy nothing in that store. Then we went to another store to buy what we needed.

-Ovier

From The Beat: Did you tell the storeowners why you were not buying anything from them? We hope so, because we want them to know that they lost business because of their ignorance.

Surprises

I like good surprises because you get good things. If you get bad surprises you'll be sad or die or something. A good surprise is like if you get presents or get like a new brother or something like that.

-Oswaldo

From The Beat: You've described what a good surprise is, Oswaldo, but you forgot to tell us about a time when you received such a surprise. What's the best surprise you ever got?

Good Or Bad Surprise

My biggest surprise was about a month ago when I was working at Taxi Burgers and this man came in. For like 30 minutes he didn't stop looking at me. I decided to clean his table and I asked, "Would you like anything else, sir?"

He said, "Do you speak Spanish?" I'm like "yes" in Spanish. Then he said, "I'm okay. Thanks son." That is when I got ticked off. "Why son?" I thought to myself.

"Don't you remember me?" he asked.

"From where?" I said.

"Don't you remember your father?" When I heard this I was like "What the ...?" Then I took my break and sat down to talk to him.

"I remember when you were three. That was the last time I saw you. Now look at you, all grown up and working!"

"How did you know where I worked?"

"Your mom told me over the phone," he said. "Look, I'm passing by. I'm on my way to Oregon to my..." then he paused... "Your family." I finished.

"Yeah...." He dropped two grand in one envelope, gave me a kiss and hug, and left.

-Ovier

From The Beat: We're not altogether sure why, Ovier, but this story and the beautiful way you wrote it literally brings tears to our eyes. We can picture how difficult it was for your father to track you down at that Taxi Burger and to engage you in conversation. We can feel your own mixed emotions in confronting him, and the love that passed between you that is worth far more than the two grand he left you with. We hope this isn't a one-shot deal from a man who has not lived up to the responsibilities that come with being a father. Sometimes, a child acts more maturely than an adult. We think that's true of you, and we're very proud of you for being so mature. Thank you for sharing this with us.

Surprises

The worst surprise I ever got was my grandfather passing away. It was a surprise because I had just seen him two days before he passed away. It didn't really hit me until we went to the funeral and afterwards. Then I used to live with him. All I can remember was all the good times we had together. I remember the good times. There was hardly any bad memories about me and my grandpa. But I know he's in heaven and in a good place. One day I will be able to see him again without a doubt.

-Princess

From The Beat: Even though death is the end for everyone, it can still come like a terrible shock when it's not expected. Although we're sorry you lost your grandfather, we're happy that you had such a fine relationship with him, and that you carry such wonderful memories. What can you do in your life to make him proud of you?

Prejudice

I seen prejudice when me and my mom were in a store and this white lady was following us around. My mom didn't say anything until the lady went to tell this man, and they both started following us. She got mad and cussed them out. Then she threw their food down and walked out. They was looking hecka stupid. It was funny.

-Miss EPA

From The Beat: We don't think this is all that funny. We would be angry, like your mother. Have you ever heard your mother, or others in your family, express prejudice towards others?

Every Man Cries

I never see a man never cry. Humans today we all are equal. We all have feelings that we hold on to that will make us cry.

My dad tells me that there is only one thing that a man has in this world and that is his word. It's like yo' word against his or hers, but all you have is yo' word. See a ninja can still get put in prison 'n jail for their word. See the government pays a lot of money for a crime that is yo' word against theirs. As long as you keep yo' word a man will never have to cry. Once a man loses his word, what else does a man have to give?

-Royalty

From The Beat: We appreciate your father's advice that all a man really has is his word. But we're not sure what this has to do with men crying. Like you said at the beginning, we're all human, and all humans cry. Some men are taught that crying is a sign of weakness, but we think saying that is itself a sign of weakness. We think it takes a very strong man to allow his tears to be seen by others. Thank you for writing seriously.

Freedom

At my house I feel like I never have any freedom. It's like my mom never wants me to go anywhere or do anything. I'm always stuck in the house, always getting in trouble 'cause I don't want to be at home.

Sometimes I feel like my mom should have took me to juvie to stay. It's like she cares about her boyfriend more than she do me. She always put him first over all of us. I got two brothers and three sisters. It's like she let him make all the rules for us. She knows me an' dat ninja don't get along. Me, I really don't care what he says. I tell him "Forget you, and have a nice day" because dat ninja neva do nothin'.

-Royalty

From The Beat: We're sorry you don't get along with your mom's boyfriend, and that you feel like she puts you and your brothers and sisters after him. Of course, you don't really wish your mom put you in juvie because the minute you get to a place like that you would regret it. With all its problems, home is the place to be.



Talk What You Know

Today, June 1, 2006, has affected me a lot. People have been getting on my nerves on and off, and it's really starting to get annoying. Like earlier today, when I was doing my science project, I just stopped talking because some people just was actin' hecka immature and just saying stupid stuff.

Someone had asked me something and when I answered them, the comment they made really made me pissed off. But whatever, 'cause tomorrow's a new day, and those certain people are going to wonder why I'm not talking to them. I'm just going to keep ignoring them like I did today.

I have spoke my mind, so until next week, gone...

-Bay Chick

From The Beat: Well, we're sorry that some young people just can't seem to understand when to be serious and when to be annoying. Ignoring ignorant people is the best policy, though, so we think you're doing the right thing. What was your science project? How did it go?

Big Surprise

My biggest surprise is when my mom told me that Ronaldiho Gaucho was my big brother. the dude that plays in Barcelona. Then when my mom told all the stuff to me I started laughing and saying no, no, no. Then my mom said yes. Then I told her why you didn't tell in all these 15 years that I have in life. And she told me because Ronaldiho Gaucho, your brother, told me not until I was 15 years old.

-Victor

From The Beat: This is really a big surprise, Victor, and a great one! The eyes of the world are all turned to soccer this week because of the World Cup. Are you watching? Who do you want to win? Spain? Brazil? USA?

Surprises

Do you like surprises? Me, I do sometimes but you should surprise me in the kitchen. Last night I was cookin' somethin' on da stove. My Auntie was lucky 'cause dat hot grease would've burnt da heck out of her. See, don't ever surprise a ninja wit' hot grease.

-Royalty

From The Beat: What were you cookin'? Were you helping your auntie, or was she helping you? Did you get to eat what you were cooking?

Stop Snitching

If you is a snitch you is just something.
If you snitch on yo' brothers and sisters that ain't right.
If you snitch on someone you care, they ain't going to like you no more.
If you snitch, well another way of saying it is "tattle tale."
If you snitch, you is hating on them.
If you are a snitch that doesn't care of snitching, well you a just a mean kid.
So if you is snitching, you better stop snitching!

-Weasel

From The Beat: We appreciate the fact that you could express your opinions in a Beat appropriate way. Sometimes, this topic makes people write the kinds of poems we can't publish. Can you think of any situation where telling an adult about something you knew would be justified? What if you tell because you want to prevent something bad from happening, is that acceptable?

Christmas in Mexico

My favorite holiday is Christmas because I go to Mexico with my family. We also stay in Mexico for New Year. I think that Christmas is better because we make a bigger party in my house. We usually go to the beach in Mexico once a year. So we go to the beach with my whole family and we celebrate New Years there. And that's why I like those holidays.

-Carlos

From The Beat: That sounds like a lot of fun, Carlos. Which beach in Mexico do you go to celebrate New Years? Do you swim there in the ocean?

When Should You Tell?

I think you tell when there is something really important and you have to tell. Like if someone's life was in danger or someone got killed and you knew who did it. Then you should tell. Or at least try and help them because if your life was in danger you would want someone to tell or help you. So that is why I think you should tell.

And another thing is that if you see someone being molested you should go help because that is very harmful to them and their body.

-Tyrica

From The Beat: We already knew you were a fine writer. But this reminds us that you're also a thinker who reasons things out for herself. We agree with your code of conduct.

Christmas

Christmas is my favorite holiday because that's the day Jesus was born, and I get to spend time with my family. The best part about Christmas is opening gifts with your family. Most of the time it's not a surprise about what I get because I go with them to get my gifts. I still be thankful for the things I do get.

-Princess

From The Beat: It's a nice gift to be thankful. After we get a certain age, Christmas is better when we have a hand in picking our presents, because by then we know what we want. What was the best surprise present you ever got that you can remember?

Every Holiday Is My Favorite

I don't have a favorite holiday! Every day is my holiday. I live life to the fullest. I eat, act, talk, look like it's a special occasion. Because it's only 12 months in a year, that's 365 days. Why shouldn't I have fun? I'm not hurting anybody. I give gifts like it's Christmas. I make big meals like it's Thanksgiving. I pop firecrackers like it's 4th of July. Party hard and have fun. I like dressing up and eating candy like it's Halloween. So really a holiday is just another day in my life. So I have no favorites because every day is my favorite.

-Miss EPA

From The Beat: We are envious of your way of life, if it's all true... When do you stop celebrating long enough to study? Now, if you're talking about a healthy mix of fun and serious, we love this piece.

The Beat Rules

The Beat was the best thing that came in my life. I used to think it sucks, but it changed my perspective on life. It changed everything about me. I felt like committing suicide, but now I feel better and have a new outlook on life. So thanks Beat! Hopefully I can change others the way you changed me. So thanks and yeah.

-Lizzy

From The Beat: We are so grateful to have made a positive difference in your life, Lizzy. We can't imagine why anyone with as much going for her as you have going for you (brains, beauty, insight, personality) ever feeling like committing suicide, but we know how painful growing up can sometimes be, so if we've made any of that easier for you, we're very happy. We want to thank you for being one of the best and most consistent writers in these pages.

Thanksgiving

My favorite holiday out of the year is Thanksgiving because for some people it's a time to get together with your family and socialize. Not only do you have a good time talkin' but you be havin' a good time eatin' some home cooked food.

For me we always have Thanksgiving dinner at my grandpa's house and we just basically update each other on what we have been doing lately. It's a real beautiful thing to just chill 'n talk with your family, feel me? But for all the people who can't do what I do wit' ma family, stay strong and keep God in yo' life.

-Bay Chick

From The Beat: We can understand why you like Thanksgiving so much. Where does your grandpa live? Does he cook? What are those "home cooked food" examples you wrote about? Do you have cousins that you only get to see on Thanksgiving?

Real Women

Real women do real things
Real women have big dreams

Real woman don't tell lies

Real women aren't afraid to cry

Real women are outspoken

Real women don't be smokin'

Real women don't need a man

Real women don't give a damn

Real women can handle theirs

Real women don't have affairs

Real women aren't gold diggers

Real women don't mess with lil' ninjas

-Tyrica

From The Beat: Where did you come up with these wonderful definitions of what a real woman is? The only one we disagree with is the one that says real women don't give a damn. We think giving a damn is important for anyone who wants to call herself (or himself) real. Do you give a damn? About what?

Favorite Holiday

My favorite holiday is July 4th because it is the funnest day to hang around and look at the fireworks. Also it is the day for me and my family to blow up fireworks too.

-Weasel

From The Beat: What else happens on the 4th? Do you and your family eat bar-b-q? Other special foods? Do you do legal fireworks?

I Dress Different

My thing dat I want to write about is how people talk about me because the way I dress. They be sayin' that I look like a gangster... I been tryin' to tell people how really I am beautiful, but I cannot because I don't want people to think I am gay. So I want to let people know that people be dressin' different because people are different.

-Salillas

From The Beat: First, we have to apologize because we know we made a lot of mistakes typing this piece. But that brings us to the second point: We could hardly read this piece because you didn't take your time writing it! We agree with you that it is wrong to judge people by the way they dress. We also think it is wrong for people to judge others as "gay" just because they say they are beautiful. You ARE beautiful, and that has nothing to do with being gay or not being gay. Our advice to you is be yourself! We hope you follow your own advice and don't judge people by the clothes they wear.

Lo Que Me Gusta Del Beat

Lo que me gusta del Beat Within es que me hicieron escribir mis escrituras con sinceridad. Yo pienso que ninguno de los temas son fuertes, pero todo ellos me gustaron aunque algunas veces no ponía atención. Me hubiera gustado que trabajáramos afuera por algunos días. También me gustaría que vinieran más días para escribir más sobre nosotros, aunque estos días que vinieron me cambiaron la forma de pensar.

Este programa me gusto porque ahora se como escribir mejor y también a pensar mejor.

Gracias por venir a ayudarnos.

From The Beat: También para nosotros es un honor encontrarnos con persona como tú que saben apreciar nuestra obra. Nos da mucho gusto saber que estas tomando ventajas de nuestro programa y que te ha ayudado en alguna parte de ti. Gracias por tu tiempo y por ser sincero.

What I Like About The Beat

What I like about The Beat Within is that they make me write my pieces with sincerity. I think that none of the topics are strong, but I did like all of them, even though sometimes I wasn't paying attention. I would have liked it if we worked on the outs for a couple of days. I also would like it if y'all came more days of the week so we could write more about ourselves, although the days that y'all have come have changed the way I think.

I liked this program because now I know how to write and to think better. Thanks for coming to help us.

-Jesus

From The Beat: It is also an honor for us to encounter people like you that appreciate the kind of work that we do. We are very pleased to know that you are taking advantage of our program and that it has helped you in some way, shape, or form. Thank you for your time and for being sincere.

Xmas Isn't Just About Gifts

My favorite holiday is Xmas because all of my family gets together and celebrates it. Some people only like Xmas because of presents, but for me not everything is presents. I mean I do like getting presents but that's not why I like being in Xmas.

I like Xmas because I get to be with my family. We get to eat all kinds of good food that usually we never eat. Usually my family gets drunk, but they know how to hang. I really like that holiday. I wouldn't give that holiday up for nothing.

-Denise

From The Beat: It is nice to have one day when all the family gets together and has a good time. When you say they get drunk but they know how to hang, do you mean that they never act the fool? Never throw up? Never pass out? We hope the getting drunk part doesn't become a part of your personal tradition.

Christmas

My favorite holiday is Christmas because that's the time you see most of my family. And also I like Christmas because I get presents. I get everything. I go happy on parties and Christmas is the best for me because we always go to parties and to the store and we buy a lot of things.

My second holiday is Thanksgiving because my family is all together around the table sharing, talking and always being happy.

-Guadalupe

From The Beat: What kinds of things do you and your friends buy when you shopping? What kind of parties do you go to? Are they dance parties? Are you a good dancer?

Christmas

My favorite holiday is Christmas. The main reason why Christmas is my favorite holiday is because the whole family is together and just having a good time. We would be dancing, caroling, telling jokes and anything else that is fun. One of my favorite parts on Christmas is opening presents. After we did that we keep having fun. Then everyone would leave around 5:00 a.m., but I wouldn't sleep.

-Frijolero

From The Beat: Does this happen at your house, or one of your relatives? How many cousins do you get to play with? Do you also get to see them at other times during the year?

Favorite Holiday, Why?

My favorite holidays are almost all of them. Yeah, weird, but um...yeah. I have special memories for all of 'em.

New Year's Eve: Yeah, we stay up all night and said wishes to the New Year.

Valentine's Day: This too! I mean it's fun and friends give you valentines, but yeah, it's cool!

April Fools: I love this one! One time when my brother was sleeping I put whip cream in his shoes and on his hand. So I tickled his face and he got ice cream and whip cream on his face. Then when he went to play outside, he put on his shoes and got whip cream. Hilarious!

May: My birthday. Yeah, the 23rd. Most people forget, but some friends don't.

June: Summer

July: 4th of July. We put them at night and our dog chases it.

October: Halloween. Funny and scary.

November: Thanksgiving. I just ate turkey almost two years ago for the first time. I dislike food, but turkey's hecka good. I hope I'm not making anyone hungry.

Christmas: we get together and give presents. It's fun and yeah, I got tons of memories.

-Wizzy

From The Beat: We'd love for you to write a piece on every single memory you have. We love reading what you have to say. But what did you mean on July 4th, you "put them at night and our dog chases it?" And what do you mean that you don't like food? Girl, you need to eat!

Christmas Week

My favorite holiday is Christmas because all my family goes to my house and everybody stays in my house for one week and we do a lot of good stuff. For example, all of my aunts do all the favorite foods and traditional foods. We play X-Box all night and all night we get to play games and do whatever we want.

-Victor

From The Beat: How many relatives spend a week at your house, Victor? Where does everyone sleep? What are the favorite foods your aunts prepare?

Christmas

My favorite holiday is Christmas because all of the families got together in their houses so they can all have a good time with their families. Like on Christmas my family gets together and then do some food, and like all party, and we have some fun. And then we open our presents and we get to tell like what you got and anything everyone else got and have fun. I like Christmas because I like to see all of my family together and be happy. So that's why I like Christmas. Because I like when people get along and they have fun and they are with all of the family having a good time.

-Esa

From The Beat: Yeah, we like Christmas too. Do you open your presents in the morning or in the evening? Do you just open any present you want, or does someone hand out the presents in a particular order? What do you like to get for Christmas? What do you like to give?

My Favorite Holiday

My favorite holiday is Thanksgiving. It's my fav because I get to hang out with all my family and cousins. We all play around and post up in EPA. We get into fights with other people. Then the dinner is the best part. They made enough food to feed East Palo Alto. We eat gumbo and turkey. Then we stay out till 12:00 at night. Then we go home and end the day.

-Jay Jay

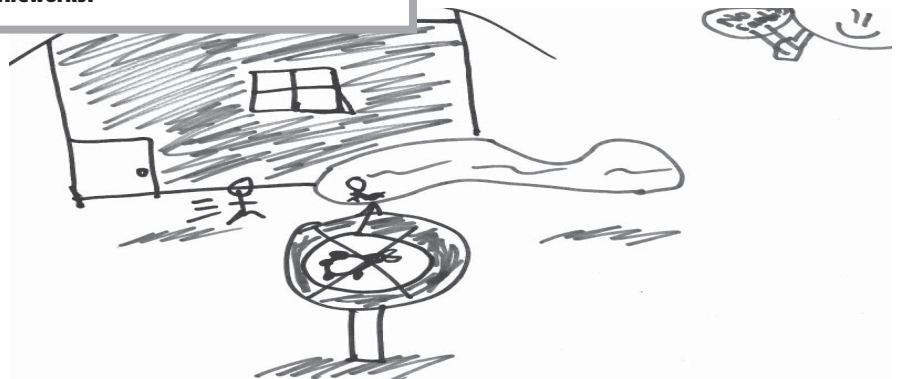
From The Beat: So fun for you is to fight with other people on a day called Thanksgiving? What's wrong with this picture? We hope you think about the consequences of your actions, Jay Jay, because those plans to go home and eat gumbo and turkey after one of those fights might not end so happily.

Fourth Of July

My favorite holiday is 4th of July because all my cousins get together and we get to do whatever we want. We be havin' hecka fun. We be at da mall an' at Great America and then go to my auntie's house an' do fireworks.

-Unknown

From The Beat: What kind of fun do you and your cousins get to have on July 4th that you don't have at other times? How many cousins are you? Have you ever seen someone have an accident with fireworks?



Holidays

My favorite holiday is Christmas. It is my favorite because it is when all of my family members get together. Also people get presents. And also it is when we celebrate when Jesus is born. I also like July 4 because there are a lot of fireworks.

-Oswaldo

From The Beat: Whose house does your family gather at on Christmas, Oswaldo? Do you open your presents on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning?

Cinco de Mayo

Well, I'm going to tell you about my favorite holiday, Cinco de Mayo. Cinco de Mayo is the best holiday for me because we show where we are from. We show how proud we are to be Mexican. Yeah, Cinco de Mayo is important for me and my family. We cook good Mexican food for Cinco de Mayo. I feel like I was in Mexico. That is why I like Cinco de Mayo.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Do you cook food on Cinco de Mayo that you don't cook at any other time of the year? Like what? How do you show that you are proud to be Mexican? What is your favorite Mexican food?

Snitching

I believe that snitching is OK when it is necessary. I also think that it is OK because it is better for me to be in trouble than for that person to keep hurting people. When it is necessary you should snitch. Kids are always afraid to tell because they would be known as the snitch, and name-calling can drive a kid to do something dangerous or to not do the right thing.

-Ovier

From The Beat: This is amazingly mature for someone your age, Ovier. We know that you want to be in the U.S. military, so if you discovered that some fellow soldiers had committed a terrible act (maybe killing civilians in cold blood), would you tell?

Dear Beat

One story really stuck to me. It was like a poem for girls who've been sexually abused. So it said never to hide your pretty face because he used you. This here is me. I wear baggy clothes and hide myself so yeah. It made me realize not to hide myself from anyone.

-In Serious Need of Help

From The Beat: We see so much beauty in you, it's hard for us to image anything that would make you want to hide in baggy clothes. (By the way, you look equally fine in baggy clothes as any other kind.) We think you're growing up, which is never easy, and that now you're like a cocoon. You are afraid to stop being a caterpillar, because it's familiar and comfortable, but your fear is only because you cannot see, yet, that you are about to emerge as a butterfly, beautiful and free.

Can You Imagine . . .

A city without violence
This classroom in silence
Streets without lights
Crack-heads without pipes
Thugs with no drugs
Jail with no bars

-Tyrica

From The Beat: Wow, Tryica. You always impress us with your writing, but sometimes the smallest poem can contain the biggest meanings. We hope that some of the things you imagine in this tight poem come true one day.

Sky

I wonder sometimes about the blue sky, why it looks so mysterious and clever. The sky has many colors for its' mysterious imagination. The sky full of colors of blue, gray, orange and red and sometimes purple but the sky reminds me of many other colors of family members I have lost in the past years. The sky reminds me of my older brother I lost last year. But when I look at the sky, I know the ones I've lost are watching over me. So when I look toward the sky all I can ask is why and they replied with the colors of the sky.

-Midnight

From The Beat: You have such a unique and poetic way of expressing yourself, Midnight. We have never thought of the sky this way before, but we will always think of it this way from now on.

When you start to
feel hurt, unsafe,
guilty, uncomfortable,
ashamed and ill that's
when you tell.

Surprises

One of the biggest surprises in my life was when I was at a funeral and these people were fighting in the church. Everybody was trying to get out of the church and the pastor was trying to break up the fight. I thought that was really disrespectful to fight in a church.

-Tyrica

From The Beat: We are trying to imagine a fight breaking out in a church at a funeral, but it's hard to imagine since it's so very disrespectful. We wonder why people who would fight in a church would even to there, and what their relationship is with the God of their beliefs.

It's Time To Tell!

I've taken it too far. The little remarks. His smile. His touch. I want him to stop. Just go away. He makes me feel uncomfortable, ashamed, and alive. I like the attention, so I'm not gonna lie. He's touched a lot of girls and that's more than he's touched me. So yeah, it's time to tell. When you start to feel hurt, unsafe, guilty, uncomfortable, ashamed and ill that's when you tell. You don't tell when it's jeopardizing a person's life. Like when it's a matter of life and death.

-Hard Hitta

From The Beat: We're not sure about not telling when it's jeopardizing a person's life, but we are sure that if you are feeling "hurt, unsafe, guilty, uncomfortable, ashamed and ill," then it is truly time to tell. The man you are describing sounds like far too many men we have known, and what we know about them is that they are totally self-centered. It is what they want that counts, not what you want. If someone is to be hurt, it won't be them. And they move from female to female to female, leaving a trail of tears along with that list of adjectives. If there's anything The Beat can do to help you free yourself from this predator, we will.

Bad And Good

A bad surprise was when I went to the mall with my friend Tonga Truck. Every minute he had to stop and eat. That day was boring because I didn't get time to buy anything because Tonga Truck was hungry. It was BAD!

A good surprise was when it was my birthday and they did a party. The only thing they give as presents was money. That day I was lucky because I also found \$100 in front of my yard. It was good and lucky that day!

-Weasel

From The Beat: Maybe somebody meant to give you that \$100 as a birthday present, but dropped it on the way into your house. What did you do with all that money? Did you save any of it? Tonga Truck may eat a lot, but we bet he's still a lot of fun to go to the mall with.

WALDEN-HOUSE PSK

I'm Mad

What it do Beat? This Lil' Zillah from Hayward. I'm mad as hell reading this Beat. Hella people up in here hella fake. How you gonna be a grown man calling yourself "lil'" Man. Be for real with yourself, and all these lil' girls talkin' 'bout how y'all got all these ninjas on y'all line. Y'all need to step y'all game up and stop rippin' and get some real money for the simple fact.

Lemme ask you a question: "Why do you think they after you?" Well, if you can't answer, let me tell you: Either you thick, or you his "ho'e." But all you ninjas need to stop messing with these young rippers. They ain't gone do nothing but get you caught up. And when y'all messing with these young rippers, y'all need to wrap up.

Real talk, but Lil' Zillah gone.

-Lil' Zillah

From The Beat: Even though we appreciate some of the advice you give, and find it of value, we wish you'd focus less attention on what other girls are doing (or not doing), and more on what one girl — Lil' Zillah — is doing (or not doing). You can't control anyone else's behavior, so you might as well not try. But you can control your own behavior — and we hope your behavior is consistent with your advice. (By the way, calling oneself "Lil' Man" doesn't mean that a person is less a man than anyone else. It doesn't matter what you call yourself as long as you act like an adult...)

Good-Bye

See, I know that we have gone through a lot of stuff. We had our relationship, even though it was not the best one. But you were always there for me. You never laid your hands on me.

See, you were the guy I loved. You were the one who let me cry on your shoulder, and now there is no more of us. Now we hate each other. Now you call me names. But that's O.K. because I got a guy who likes me and we got a good relationship and I care about him.

See, I know that he will love me and we won't be smoking. He won't be yelling at me. But I know that one day, you're going to miss me, and I just have a few words to say. See, I'm a strong girl to go through what we have gone through and my love is great for you. But I won't put everything on one guy and I won't depend on you and any guy. So good-bye, and I do love the guy I'm with.

-B-Eyes

From The Beat: This is a very gentle good-bye, even though you reveal some things about this relationship that don't sound very gentle at all. We're happy you have someone new in your life that cares for and respects you, but the most important thing you wrote is that you won't depend on any guy. If you keep that promise, you won't be disappointed.

Love?

Love

What is love?

It's a four-letter word

A word dat's rarely even heard

Do I have love?

Have I ever had love?

I don't know 'cause

I don't know what love is,

But to me it's like water under da bridge

Sayin' dat to say it's hidden

Like my dad was all those years in prison

Can I have love?

Will Juicy give me love

Or will I just get played

Like an E-40 CD on a hyphy day?

I think I still need to be put up on game

About love 'cause after this one

My relationships will never be the same

'Cause I'ma be the one playin' all the games

So until I figure out what love is

I'ma sit back, relax, and try to pop a thizz!

-Lil' Baby

From The Beat: We appreciate you trying to understand what love is because we still don't know, and we've lived several lifetimes! If you figure it out, will you share your secret with us? The one thing that we don't appreciate, however, and the one thing that should cause you to worry, is connecting the thought of love with popping a thizz! Especially where you are, we think you need to make a bigger effort to focus your thinking on other avenues of rest and recreation. Until you are free of your mental addiction, you aren't free!

Really Keepin' It Real

For all you punk rock ninjas that's talkin' about keepin' it real, stop tryin' to cover up ya' diaper rashes and stop actin' like poodles 'cause peep this: All you youngstas these days be snitchin' and that ain't even cool.

Stop actin' like broads, especially if you from da town. That ain't even how we known for getting down. But anyways, just a friendly reminder to all you ninjas.

-Meechie

From The Beat: We have our own advice for you, Meechie: don't worry so much about what other young people are doing, and focus some attention on the things you need to change about you! You are not here because of snitches. You are here because of your choices. Owning your own responsibility is the beginning of maturity. It's time.

I don't know what love is,
But to me it's like
water under da bridge

ANOMALY Writing from the Upstate Correctional Facility in Malone, New York, Anomaly is quickly becoming a regular in our pages. And yes, you heard right, he's writing from The Big Apple. The Beat touches more places than most of us are aware of. We're convinced that no matter where you go in this great country, the struggles are still similar across the board. Anomaly believes that most of the struggles we encounter have to with one group of people. He explains what he thinks way better than we could, so we'll shut up and give the platform to him, but before we do we'd like to remind Anomaly to keep us in his address book because he's growing on us fast.

A Conscious Mind

Deep thoughts or logical thinking or just plain reality,
 Something America is zombies to or just paralyzed in the
 mind to see.
 Maybe these words will make up parts of your mind that
 toehold no control or never thought you had caused you
 are blind,
 Take heed just listen closely to a conscious mind.
 Who of what made us live by the constitution or laws of
 today era,
 Why must we obey them when the constitution is somewhat
 a secret And the laws switch up whenever.
 Psychology hold that's what they have on the mass or should
 I say the whole world,
 The secret society, pay attention is trying to take over and
 rule the whole world.
 One world religion, government and economic balance,
 Some people read books and honestly see what it really is
 but sit in silence.
 A conscious mind needs to oversee which is very much an
 emergency,
 Really break down the word emergency and what you need
 to do is emerge and see,
 In the 1700's the Zion's, which is what we call the Jews,
 Wrote a protocol for one world domination, which some
 took place and some still happens.
 Religion is just the breakdown to make yourself hard to
 find,
 Honestly if you could say you love and believe in a person
 you never saw,
 Makes you way off a conscious mind.
 The pope John Paul has his bones in his closet — on the

side, before the hypocrite was the pope, he made a selling
 the Nazi people cyanide.
 Our president Bush's grandfather played a major part in
 Hitler's massacre to think I didn't know.
 He was one of the main founders to Hitler to kill off his
 people oh you didn't know.
 Silent weapons of war I'm telling it goes a long way.
 Society is the Governments guinea pig and they experiment
 and have their way.
 A.I.D.S, S.T.Ds, cancer and the new chicken disease,
 All of those are man made and the Zion's had this planned
 out way before our time, can't you see?
 Drugs is major part as they smuggled into the country which
 seems so easy these days,
 But the main distributor is the government because it's
 nothing they don't have their hands in hear what we say.
 Reagan used drugs to breakdown the strongest movements
 by the black man, put the drugs in to the black man hands
 and he will kill off thousand of strong black man.
 Divide and conquer that's the oldest trick in the book.
 But a paralyzed mind can't over see the tactics while they
 look.
 U.S. history is only what they want you to see and why is
 that? Cause they took us from out country, stole our culture,
 gave us a language and there ways now how about that?
 History is what you call the pigs history never letting you
 know that everything they learned is taught to them by the
 black man then the pigs conquered claiming glory...
 All we know now is "His - Story."
 There's so much more like "911 Fahrenheit" was the greatest
 trick thrown in our faces,
 The president is so confident that our minds is paralyzed
 and show his plans in our faces.
 Look at the Katrina crisis, this dude on television acting
 like he could care less, cause honestly he is not in control
 just a hypnosis to the mass society and he could care less.
 It goes deeper but all you got to do is look at the facts and
 the truth aint hard to find,
 Once you maintain control of self and realize your taking
 steps to become the lord of your thoughts controlling of
 your mind
 And that's the start of a conscious mind.

KEXA GUTIERREZ Writing from Santa Clara County Jail, this next writer writes about what it means to struggle. And if struggling to get through then you will only become more powerful on the other end. As humans, we endure a lot of pain because we dish out a whole lot of pain. So it's hard for us to make ourselves vulnerable by being off guard. But in being vulnerable and off guard, we're actually learning how to go through hardships knowing that as long as these experiences aren't the cause of our demise, things will always get better. We appreciate Kexa for touching on this topic and hope more topics will be touched on in the near future by this writer.

Pushed Beyond My Limits

As this Eagle Warrior Spirit contends within the confines of this reality, it is apparent that one must commence assertive academics against the furtive, subversive sensory deprivation, and long-term isolation that endeavors to overwhelm and divide one's mind! This will, in effect, promote and gradually unfold a tremendous aggregate of tumultuous brain-storming of which acute awareness is a by-product!

Hardened by hundreds of years of oppression! Pushed beyond my limits, I learned to exceed my limits. First, mentally, then physically, and finally, spiritually! Building endurance! I used to watch the "Magician's Box." Now, it watches me: repetition, repetition, probabilities, and possibilities. I am Indigenous.

A Struggle

Life is struggle — struggle is life
 Revolutionary minds — continue to stride
 A cause against — all oppression
 Against obsession — all oppression
 Against obsession — with race depression
 Yet I contemplate... Behold thee...
 What becomes free — revolutionaries end
 In complacency...
 So what now
 Mr. Know-it-all-Lift only one,
 To let others fall? Who is now suffering
 Beneath? It used to be you
 Now it's another...Gee?
 So it's clear — we all have struggles
 A Mac-10 protects mine — while God sorts others?
 And yet there is — another solid solution
 A symposium of words — continue the evolution
 Life in struggle — struggle in life
 Evolutionary minds — enhance to survive.

I learned to exceed my limits. First, mentally,
 then physically, and finally, spiritually!

Don't Come Back

If you walk out that door don't ever come back.
Forget my kisses, my hugs, and the love we had.
If you walk out that door don't ever come back.
A year of patience, trust, and attention down the drain.
If you walk out that door don't ever come back.
Forget my eyes, lips, and hands that no longer desire
you.
If you walk out that door don't ever come back.
Forget that I exist, that you met me and don't regret it.
If you walk out that door don't ever come back.
Forget about everything a man like you has a good
experience
In that he walk out that door, but guess what?
My dumb ass took him back.

If you walk out that door don't ever come back.
Forget my eyes, lips, and hands that no longer desire you.
If you walk out that door don't ever come back.
Forget that I exist, that you met me and don't regret it.

Sorry Is For Fools

I fell in love with a man.
All was good at first, then began the lies.
Baby I'm sorry, I was in love and I forgave him.
I was in love with a man.
He's hurt me once and promised not to do it again;
A week past then began the cheating.
Baby I'm sorry. I was in love and I took him back.
I was in love with a man.
He's hurt me twice and promised there will be no third;
A week past then began the abuse.
Baby I'm sorry. I was in love and I gave him three
chances
I love you too but I'm sorry baby.
Sorry is for fools.

MUÑECA Some of you know her as Muñeca, some of you know her as Xiomara Gonzales, but whatever you know her as doesn't matter. What matters is that she's an incredible poet and this week she lets her presence be known once again. We miss her constant submissions because she brings a perspective to The Beat that we aren't used to. Sort of motherly in her advice to the younger generation, this week she speaks of love lost, being in a 'hella nasty' place, and a poem that we're sure will turn heads. After reading 'My Body' we were like what's up wit' you! Then we were reminded that we're at work and that isn't appropriate, but this lady knows how to make herself a dime piece on paper. You've got skills. Muñeca writes us from a correctional institution in Niantic, Connecticut.

My Body

From the beautiful thick pink lips to the big brown eyes
To the long curly hair down to my juicy thick thighs
I love my body, yeah I do.
I love it more than candy too
I love my body yeah I do.
I love my toes, my teeth and my beauty mark too.
Men dream of a chance to get this, but baby you can't have
this.
This is all mines and I enjoy every bit of it,
From my lovely voice to my finger tips.
I love my body this is all mine from my cute belly button
To my thick eye lashes from my scent to my skin tone,
From my big breast to my ghetto booty.
I love my body and this is all mine.

Hella Nasty!

This place is hella nasty
I go to take a shower and the drain is closed with hair
This place is hella nasty
I go to eat my food and it's expired.
This place is hella nasty
Throw on a uniform smell like onions and cheese.
This place is hella nasty
Fungus in the toilet bowl.
This place is hella nasty
Bugs all over the floor.
This place is hella nasty
Sneakers stick to the ground it's been so long since they
mopped it. This place is hella nasty
Pissy mattress, mildew sheets, brown towels.
This place is hella nasty,
But I come back every time... Damn!

LIL' SPANKS Short, but right to the point, Lil' Spanks is back, sending us a 'brief message' to all. A message that we have to say should be read by everyone — locked up or free. Some of the things we do are never worth the risk we take making them. However we still continue to live our desired lifestyle. Oh well, we guess everyone will learn when it's their time to. This beautiful piece of art was sent to us from California State Prison in Calipatria, CA.

Brief Message

I'm living by the beat of my heart or the moment you call
it,
My mission is survival,
'Cause my neighbors are rivals,
and I refuse to be some boy's target,
I'm giving the State Of California all my youth,
So many dreams I had as a youngsta had no chance to
pursue,
Trying to shake all the twists and turns I've faced in just
21 years,
Some good some bad but not worth the sacrifices
I made to waste my life up in here,
I knew the risk and the consequence but paid them no
mind,

I was caught up in my own agenda to busy getting high,
Now it seems that I'm so far from the world behind these
walls,

Striking up invincible love letters
And my voice remains unheard with each collect call,
I'm unforgettable but hard to remember the thought of me
fades,

On my door waiting on the mail man who passes me up
And I can't even get the time of day,
So I read the few stars left in the sky,
To keep myself going with my head up high,
I've fought my way through life no time for tears, all I
got going for me is that the days turn to months and the
months turn into years,

So this is my message for the up and coming generation,
This ain't shhh but a quick death or life of incarceration,
I live the twisted shhh you glorify,
I ran with the thugs, who popped guns
And sold drugs under the street lights,
The sex, the drugs, the money, and murder,
Build up your potential and take yourself further,
Because what I've mentioned above...
Ain't none of this shhh worth it!

SPIRITUAL GANGSTA

We're going to deem Rhonda

Jones AKA Spiritual Gangsta the spiritual mother of The Beat Within. She, by far, writes more about God than any of us combined. And we're not going to lie, we've learned to become cynical about pieces dealing with finding God because too many times have we experienced an undying passion to live for God when incarcerated only to fall right back into temptation once you're released. It saddens us to see such a thing. But with Rhonda we don't feel that sense. We truly believe she's genuine in expressing her desire for another way of living, but really only time will tell. At the very least, she's given The Beat more inspiration than most of us have had in our whole lifetime. And if karma is a true thing, than this lady has a whole lot of happy days ahead of her. We have taken her in our family and she has taught us more than we can retain. For this, we thank you and wish you the best on your journey through life. Hopefully The Beat office will be able to meet you one day. By the way, Rhonda writes to us from the Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, CT.

A Letter to My Attorney

There are times that you underestimate my spirituality; mad... why should I be, when I know I am going home eventually.

Six weeks will pass by real soon, and then I will be living a life, that God won't let me ruin.

I have already come to terms about my behavior; the difference in me now is due to my Lord and Savior. In Jesus Christ, I now am at rest, confident in Him, I will do my best.

Furthermore my changed life has already begun, with Christ Jesus in all my decisions.

Once I learned to discern my thoughts, it was not acknowledging Christ, my biggest fault. You see, God had a purpose for this bid, for me to learn to value the life that I live.

In jail, He gave my life purpose so I'll be a better person when I surface. So now I have the best of credentials, placing all my confidence in the unseen essential. That's why I am grateful for the predicament that I am in, with determination not to return here again. So know that my heart is not grieving because the modification was denied, I'm still just as free on the inside.

I only have 6 weeks more, finally putting an end to this revolving door. So thanks for your concern and interest, but know that I am too blessed to be stressed. I can't afford to go berserk, because I'm commissioned to do the Lords Work.

Coming Out Of Darkness

Many of us are in jail
Because of an angry heart,
When we recognize this that the beginning of a start
In order for healing

To begin:

We need to get to know
The person we are within.
Underneath all that's

Buried inside:

Is the person that we
Try so hard to hide.
So now its time to give
These things thought:

Because if we don't
It's our own fault,
Then this poem

Will not sound strange:

If it's in your heart
For you to change,
You will change by
Knowing why you feel:
Because this is how
You will heal.

God's Mercy

The Bible says in Psalms 103:4 "Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies."

In Psalms 103 David is talking about God's mercies.

A lot of times with the life style that I was choosing, shoplifting, smoking crack, hanging out all night, I could have ended up dead, but God's mercies kept me. He didn't give up on me, though many times I had. I thank God for his everlasting kindness.

On July 16 '04 I came to prison. Before I came, I was running around doing all kinds of sinful acts. Even though I was brought up in church, church wasn't me. I used to go to church and then go boosting. I started to rebel when I got older and tasted all of the things the world has got to offer. God's mercies were still upon me.

However this time when I got to prison, I started to see how my life was spanned, from the very jaws of death, I still have good health, and my sanity all because of God's abundant mercy.

I now realize that I can't neglect such a great blessing like I did before, it's too precious. I often have to remind myself to that God didn't deal with me according to all the wrong I did.

He shows us kindness, not because of who we are, but because of who He is.

And remember the Bible says in Psalm 1:1 blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.

In prison we can find ourselves surrounded by people we would not normally choose to hang around with. Due to the situation we are in that cannot always be avoided at least not in a physical sense.

The Bible says in Corinthians 15:33 "that evil communications, corrupt good manners." Be not deceived. So watch your company.

We will always be confronted by the ungodly whether we're in prison or free; but we don't have to walk with them spiritually.

When we do find ourselves being confronted by the "counsel of the ungodly" we can always use the opportunity to be a testimony for the one we serve.

I know a lot of people have trouble verbally witnessing to others, but they can still be testimony by not participating in the things the ungodly have no problem being involved with.

We are in the world, but we are not of it. By separating ourselves from the "counsel of the ungodly" we can truly be "blessed".

The bible says that Greater is He that is in us, that is in the world.

We have the assistance from the most high, that can we can overcome, every obstacle, on every temptation that comes our way.

Jesus said, "Follow me" all Christians are called to serve and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.
ARE YOU FULFILLING YOUR CALLING?

CHRIST IS COUTING ON YOU.

Message Delivered.

In order for healing

To begin:

We need to get to know

The person we are within.

Underneath all that's

Buried inside:

Is the person that we

Try so hard to hide.

I read my Bible
And make sure that I pray
Through Christ Jesus is how
I now survive
Thanking and praising Him
That I'm alive

Coming Out Of Darkness

Coming in and out of jail had got so monotonous, that often years of this, it seemed normal. I wasn't trying to see so my faults as a predicament I barely gave it any thoughts whatsoever.

Then this time, I got sick and tired of playing cops and robbers, as in a game of tag, and me always ending up being ... IT... as in gotcha, you're IT.

The IT in me has finally discovered that I can live better with my freedom. I've had enough!! I should have taken heed of that poster that said WHEN YOU'VE TRIED EVERYTHING ELSE, THEN TRY GOD. But at the time I couldn't fathom what trying God even meant. That sounded too perplexing, I just knew that I was tired of doing things RHONDA'S WAY. How good it feels that I am now literally sick of Rhonda's bull, that I can no longer feed myself anymore because my way just continued to go further and further down the hill.

Thank God I got to the point of being so lost that I sought God to rescue me. I truly sought God out of desperation because I was tired of my pathetic situation.

There's a proverb that says, "Ye simple ones, how long will ye love simplicity?" Proverb 1:22

All my prior methods of get rich or die tryin' had failed and as long as I used the same strategies, they would continue to fail.

Here I am now, 42 and for years I ran into the same brick walls over and over again.

I am just now discovering the wretched fool that I was, I had actually accepted the outcome of being in jail because it came with the life style that I was living. That's how come my life stayed stuck on stupid.

Then once again in jail, the not place to be, someone asked me a question that caused me to do inventory and face reality.

The soul searching was for sure needed. I discovered in Christ I didn't have to have to be defeated, God said that he had given me that power of choice, I could continue as I used to, or listen to his voice. After reading the Bible I started really feeling this, that being in Christ is the only way to exist. After years of living with all my life, in Christ Jesus, I am learning to survive. It was the life that I was telling myself that I had to change and now change doesn't seem to change.

So the moral, had a happy ending, because my new life in Christ, is just beginning now I am no longer fearing toggled it, because in Christ Jesus I am now living legit.

God manifested Himself to me as a real human being. No longer was he a far away God. For the moment I repented and turned to him, I've been in his presence.

It's when I became submissive to him and teachable that through Christ Jesus I became reachable.

God is now working out my solution. May the Lord add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Amen.

Coming Out Of Darkness

I don't allow my Bible study
To be a ritual;
I just do it consistently
Until it becomes habitual,
In the morning
When I first aware:
I pray to be forgiven
For any past, present, and future mistakes
And this is how
My day begins:
With the assistance
That I am forgiven
Then as I
Go about my day:
I read my Bible
And make sure that I pray
Through Christ Jesus is how
I now survive
Thanking and praising Him
That I'm alive
The Bible says, "Hebrews 10:35
Don't let this happy trust in
The Lord die away, no matter what"
Thank you, I am now free,
The Bible says, Psalm 34:4
I sought the Lord and He heard me
And He delivered me from all my fears.
Message Delivered Amen
O taste and see that the Lord is good. Ps 34:8
So coming out of darkness
Is now my theme:
Because the Bible is the light
That showed me what life means
The Bible says 2 Timothy 2:15
"Study to show thyself approved unto God,
A workman that needeth not to be ashamed
Rightly dividing the word of truth."
The Bible says, "2 Timothy 3:16, all scripture
Is inspired by God and is useful for
Teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting
Faults and giving instruction for right
Living, so that the person who serves
God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind
of good deed."
The Bible says, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let
Us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.
Fear God, and keep his commandments;
For this is the whole duty of man...
For God shall bring every work into
Judgment, with every secret thing, whether
It be good, or whether it be evil.
The Bible says 2 Peter 2:21, for it
Would have been much better for them never
To have known the way of righteousness then
To know it and then turn away from the
Sacred command that was given them.
Have a blessed day in Christ Jesus Amen

Here I am now, 42 and for years I ran
into the same brick walls over
and over again.

MIKE BURGE We're always excited to read a different perspective — new thoughts massage our curiosity. And what perspective is more different than that of a man 'Over 50' writing from Louisiana State Prison in Angola, Louisiana. With experiences that demand our respect, we automatically thought of Mike as someone many of us can learn from — and that we did. Seeing the world through the lens of older eyes, he describes struggles most of us haven't even fathomed yet. Struggles such as death becoming more realistic as people who were once your peers leaving this life and moving on. But we're sure even the youngest of our readers can gain something from reading his wisdom. And that's the best name we can give what he offers — pure wisdom. His closing poem is brutally sickening as he describes what it's like in 'The Angola Infirmary'. We hate that he's there, but appreciate his words as we know many of our young people need to hear this in order to realize how their actions may map out their future. Thank you Mike for your very informative pieces. We appreciate it more than you know and can't wait until we hear from you again.

Over 50

Now that I'm over 50 I reflect more on my future
At my age I believe a lot of people do.
I am beginning to grasp that my time here,
Is slowly beginning to come to an end.
I now have time to dwell upon my past follies.
Idling away in a 6 by 9 foot cell.
On so many matters in my earlier life I was reckless.
I wasted precious time when I was young.
I squandered away many good opportunities.
If only I would have been more focused.
My existence now lies within a prison inside a prison.
I am now confined in a lonely small space for decades.
Still I must gauge myself in my daily monotonous life.
I find myself laboring hard in a battle to slay demons.
Time is spent imploring myself to become a finer person.

I dream of the "streets" knowing damn well I can't go.
In my dream I am a free man fathering children.
Sharing my world is a strong woman that I love.
I apply myself to hopefully making my dream a reality.
There is always work to be done on gaining headway.
As I do my life sentence without parole at the LA state prison.
Inside here I can manage for years to cope and carry on.
But even inside the walls of a prison, sooner or later,
Life's misfortunes will puncture one's armor
In my thirty years of holding on at Angola,
My son, Mom, Dad and Grandparents have all perished.
The seasons of my life I dearly missed with the ones I adored.

Over 2 decades ago I murdered 3 inmates at Angola in 1983.

In 1985 in the "free-world" a trial was held not far from
Angola.
Unfortunately my alibi of self-defense only 2 jurors grasped
By a 10-2 vote of guilty 12 jurors resolved my destiny
The verdict damned me to a life lost in hell.
Of not having enough time I have now become afraid.
As I get older and continually keep aging over 50.

I was diagnosed in 2000 with the deadly disease Hepatitis C
Angola refuses to treat me for it although they treat dozens
for it.
I am now becoming more conscious of my lamp flickering,
And becoming fainter as I keep edging nearer,
To the end of my tunnel
Why I focus harder on taking better care of myself
Most people over 50 learn to value and enjoy life more
To become a vigorous 80 or 90 we would all like to pull
through.
Conceivably even if it may be a frail 80 or 90.
Just as long as we can still take care of ourselves.
Without having to depend on others to tend to our every need.
We study the obituaries more as we continually age over 50.
To the ages of the deceased we compare our own age.
We learn from the obituaries that many people die in their
50's.
Also we are warned by this that we're only here for a little
while.

In I being forced to endure my life confined in a small space,
I am troubled now in the effect it made me into the person I
am.
Because of that at times I hate the person I have become.
But there must be some notch of self-esteem even in my
darkest hour
But still, as I press onward with my life,
I am still at work diligently to progress in any event.
Still pursuing the art of trying to better myself.

In my 30 years here I have witness many died here needlessly.
And their final home be the prison cemetery, called "Point
Lookout"
After the corpse laid unclaimed by relatives for burial outside.
Now I feel fortunate for me to have survived long enough,
To now be able to say that I am "Over 50"

The Angola Infirmary

This is my story of my one night stay at "The Angola Infirmary"
The guards imprisoned me in a small room on the ward.
Isolated and shackled prison officials have always kept me.
With no way to pass the time I soon became bored.
Drawing me to look out the small windowpane on the door.
My view from the window gave me a look out on the open ward.
My eyes saw around 25 mostly occupied prison beds.
The elderly men moved slowly and appeared to be ailing.
Near many beds were old wheelchairs and oxygen tanks.
Off in a corner sat an aged T.V. set and plastic chairs.
That night I gazed at the labored breathing of old prisoners.
Most of them seem to be sucking air in through a straw.
Tugging air in, then clinging to it for a moment, then letting it
out.
All night long they repeated the tedious task as they slept.
Two ladies dressed in white sat fixing medication packs.
Within a glass enclosed nurse's station.

A younger con of 30 I saw detained in with the elderly.
He looked sickly and fragile and aged long before he's due.
He was wearing death his reflection betrayed to all.
His skin was tautly drawn across his face and cheeks.
Giving the image that his face has collapsed inward.
Around his nose his skin seem to have plunged inward.
Protruding his slender nose noticeably outward.
His hollow eyes descended backward into his eye sockets.
The young convict possessed the smell of death.
Despairing the odor I began feeling nauseated.
Even behind my bolted door the stench unpleasantly reeked.
That the cleansing chemicals combined with air fresheners,

Sprayed by inmate trustees failed to mask.

In the dying man's blue vein stick of an arm,
Was a needle stuck in a vein fastened to a tube.
Leading to glass bottle suspended from a tall metal pole.
My eyes followed the slow steady dripping of the clear fluid.
Flowing down the tube into they dying flesh at the other end.
Covering his mouth and nose was a small plastic mask.
That connected to a tube leading to an oxygen tank.
Within his own agony every so often,
He unleashed a barely audible moan.
Compassion flowed deeply inside me as I studied his torment.
My inquiries divulged that he was afflicted with lung cancer that if
he lived 2 more weeks he would be most fortunate.
He was helpless and vulnerable and all alone.
After a lonely, ghastly, suffering, death soon awaited him.
With no family, nor friends to comfort him.
Dawning in my head was the candor of his plight.
That just for a brief time are we alive to cherish life.

Reality wring its' way through me as I watched the poor man.
His foreseeable demise made me meditate of my homeland.
So close but yet so removed from me.
Merely sixty miles due south lies my Baton Rouge
In a man lacking liberty my beautiful city is lost to me.
A city of grace, beauty, and passion is my Baton Rouge.
In comparison Angola is a hell made of vindictive punishment.
Two conflicting worlds, one open to all, the other one cut off.
In myself doing life without parole at the LA State Penitentiary,
That one-day soon the dying man's destiny will await me.
That my final days in this life will unfortunately be at,
The Angola Infirmary.

The Voice Within

From the depths of our conscious mind where in this shadowy realm resides the wise man in all of us. He lives in life of a hermit with no one to talk to and rarely sought by the man who is, externally, himself, who knows the wise man is there but thinks little of his counsel and self righteousness. The wise man lives in a shallow, dark, and cold cave where the sun shines dim and as man falls deeper into an ignorantly-stubborn abyss, the light for the wise man grows even dimmer.

At times, the wise man yells out to man allowing his sound to ripple like waves on the surface of the ocean that grow as they near the shore. The man hears the echo but does the opposite of what the wise man has been saying. Soon man grows irritated and annoyed by the voice he hears with resonant persistence and he finds a way to shut off as much of it as he could. Through this repulsion, the wise man is weakened, dull and inept. He struggles to live but is reluctant to die in hopes of living long enough to save man from himself.

Not a day goes by that man has lived without effort. He labors endlessly and his reality is that of a beast who lives among the cruel and wicked souls that savagely plunder and kill. The battle is brutal and man is draped in blood shed along the way through the wounds he mortally inflicts on his opposition. He's immune to the stench and sight of the lifeless bodies he leaves behind while traveling this violent path.

There is no beacon or guiding light on this route and man constantly crashes and conflicts with those headed in the same direction. He refuses to yield and fights his way to overcome the many obstacles he encounters.

He presses on though he believes the road has no exits. He expects to reach a land filled with riches — as if violence truly rewards you for your dedication and rage. He knows the wise man still lives because he hears him and the more he's heard, the more violent man becomes, in hopes of ending the tormenting voice attempting to derail him and cheat him of his dues. Every so often, man stumbles upon a nugget of gold — left behind by those who perished along the way. He robs and steals and considers this great wealth and this fuels his greed while making him worse. As he nears this illusion promise land it becomes harder for him. The path is steeper; his opponents are stronger and just as determined to live a better life. As man climbs up this hill, he senses his exhaustion from years on this road. He knows he's becoming vulnerable to forceful elements around him. The wise man begins to speak louder because he knows man's will is weakening. Man no longer prevents the voice from coming and breaking through his defensive walls. Man pushes on but he now notices that all he finds is the same things he started off with and he isn't gaining more on this impasse. He's lost much along the way, falling victim to his own gullibility and other people's manipulations. He has nothing to prove, to show that he's traveled this far and for so long. His battle wounds do not attest too much since

FRANK SERRANO From the depths of one of the darkest, if not the darkest prison in California comes a bright light illuminating everything in its path. Writing from Pelican Bay in Crescent City, CA, Frank gives us something we're sure everyone can relate to. You know, that voice in your head that you ignore when you do something that may put you in a sticky situation. He rightfully deems this voice 'the wise man', and in doing so, illustrates a conversation between the wise man and the man who's out of control. A very interesting idea and it made for a great piece. Not to mention, the author is seriously talented. Thank you Frank...

everyone is scarred from the struggles he's had to endure. As he enriched himself through others, now others take from him the little he has.

The voice within is starting to make sense now. Man stops to listen — as he never done before — and he hears the wise man trying to help him without concern for his own demise. He realizes the wise man has lived, all these years, alone and in cold darkness without complaint but somehow finding the strength to keep man from self-destructing. As man stands at attention, the wise man tells him that he's came to a cross road and gives man the choice to wither away on the same route or venture a new one — one less traveled, but he promised man a happier end. Man, not knowing what lies ahead, opted to change directions in hopes to end arduous undertakings and find a better life for him.

Because of mans cooperation, the wise man has found the energy to walk and talk coherently. He escapes the coldness and darkness of the cave. He makes his new home in view of the sun where light was once so bright and the heat soothing to his eyes. He could not communicate with man extensively, helping him cope with his new reality if only man promises to keep himself from temptation and doubt when faced with advertises that can lead him astray. Man becomes enlightened and begins to reflect on the life he once lived, soon realizing all the pain and suffering he could have avoided had he paid heed and hearken to the Wiseman's wisdom and teachings. He wasted countless years needlessly over pride, selfishness and egotism.

Man is still no closer to the truth he seeks but he knows now that an inch forward, on this path is more than what he was taking before. He no longer feels threatened by mysteries abound and is no longer on a defensive when new turn of events transpire unexpectedly.

Mans inner voice is in sync with his outer sound, making man and the wise man converse intelligently with each other and those man socializes within his environment. Man no longer feels the urge or the need to do evil and wicked misdoings on anyone or anything. Soon the wise man came down from his cave to meet man at the end of the road, to join and give man what he searched and fought for but never acquired — a soul! To guide man closer to the truth... man is at his demise.

This is how the wise man saved man from himself. He led him onto his materialistic death and helped him reborn spiritually where upon man will know the ultimate truth — himself!

JOHN RICHARD BROWNE Even though he lets it be known that this isn't something he wrote, we thought we should publish it because it has real meaning for him personally. And though we've heard it before, it's always liberating to know we aren't the only ones who want love while we're living rather than have people come out of the woodwork when we've passed away. It seems like people do that a lot, won't show someone love until they're dead. It's not right, but hey, like incarceration you don't know what good you hold until you've flung it away. Read on and don't fling away the thought of giving now rather than later. John Richard Browne writes us from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison.

Give Now

I would rather have one little rose from the garden of a friend
Then to have choicest flowers when my stay on Earth must end.
I would rather have one pleasant word in kindness said to me,
Than flattery when my heart is still and life cease to be.

I would rather have a loving smile from friends I know are true,
Then tears shed 'round my casket when this world I bid adieu!!!!
Blossoms bring to me today, whether pink, white, or reds,
I'd rather have one blossom now, than a truckload when I'm dead...
(I believe my mother was trying to tell me it was the end for her by sending me the above poem. (Author unknown)

I would rather have one pleasant
word in kindness said to me,
Than flattery when my heart is still
and life cease to be.

SANTIAGO GONZALES As The Beat passes from the hands of one old Beat writer (in this case, the great Wardog, Israel Perez) to new Beat writers, we are the winners! As you will see, we have a brand new and exciting voice to add to the many who make up our Beat Without Family. Because of the length of this piece, we've taken the liberty of breaking it into three parts. The first part introduces this wonderful story of "escape" from Prison. Part I ends after a long and tiring journey from California to Arizona. We hope we are not giving away too much to say that this new story teller, Santiago Gonzales — who writes of his elaborate prison "escape"— is, indeed, writing us from his cell at Salinas Valley State Prison... We can assure you that Parts II and III will be as dynamic and exciting as Part I, below...

The Escape, Part I

I escaped; I escaped from Salinas Valley State Prison. I, and I alone escaped from this hellhole. I'm the only prisoner in the history of this prison's existence to ever have escaped from this maximum security level IV prison, and live to tell about it. I got to experience freedom again when I thought I was doomed! I got to laugh, I got to play, I got to meet family I never thought I'd ever see. I got to do so many wonderful things I hadn't done in such a long time before I escaped.

But the most wonderful thing I got to experience was love again! I had been in prison for such a long time, since February of 1994. Most of that time was spent in the worst holes (Ad-Seg) in the California prison system. I had a parole date at one time, in 2002 to be exact. The worst thing that could've happened to someone happened to me... I caught a third strike in prison! In Salinas Valley State Prison. It wasn't a serious crime, but they struck me out anyways. I was taken to court in Santa Clara County and had to fire my public pretender and attempt to be my own lawyer. The charges against me actually only carried a short sentence, without the third strike. Penal Code 76(a) They system took advantage of me, and railroaded me as I expected they would and I took notes.

My case is finally in federal court and it looks promising! But, while I was in the Santa Clara County Jail and facing life in prison, I could not conceive the idea of spending the rest of my life in a California State Prison, level IV! It had been the worst imaginable horrific experience from the beginning of my incarceration in 1994, to the date of my third strike prosecution in 2000. There especially was absolutely no way in hell I was ever going back to Salinas Valley State Prison!

I began to plan my escape. I thought to myself, if it's good for Santa Clara County, it's good for Cochise County, Arizona. My plan was to write a real bomb threat of an imminent attack that was going to occur at the Cochise County superior Court House and blow it up killing all the judges. "My family is originally from Douglas, Arizona, I'm a first Generation California boy, but if I would have been born in Arizona I would have been a third generation AZ boy." My plan was to write my bomb threat and mail it to the Cochise County Superior court clerk in hopes that my letter would threaten, disrespect and intimidate them infuriate them and possibly get charged and taken to Arizona to get prosecuted.

When you mail a letter from the county jail in Santa Clara County you're allowed to seal the envelope and can even get away without putting your true return address. I made it seem as if I was on the streets and was gonna bomb the court house myself! I wrote my true name and everything. I wanted to get charged. My plan was if I did get charged and I was taken to Cochise county jail in Arizona, I was gonna escape! That was my sole purpose in writing this bomb threat. You see, I thought the county jails in Arizona were old and easy to escape out of, that their security was weak because people in Arizona are more laid back than in California and not as crazy.

I mailed my letter to Cochise County, Arizona in March of 2000, and boy did I cause a ruckus! The Santa Clara County District Attorney even tried to get my proper status

revoked! But the judge denied that. My third strike case in Santa Clara county followed its course, and in April of 2000, a jury convicted me of two counts of Penal Code (code 76(a) (Threatening a public official.) In November of 2000 a judge sentenced me to 25 years to life consecutive to 25 years to life, plus a consecutive 5 year prison enhancement and four consecutive, one year prison priors for a grand sum of 59 years' to life and life!

I started out in 1994 with nine years for a robbery. Penal code 211. I had a parole date in 2000. (2002 for 115's, loss of good time.) Now I'm gonna spend the rest of my life in prison for nothing! I didn't do it. That's all I got to say. I'm innocent.

After I was sentenced and taken back to the county Jail, the County Corrections Officers carried me to the bus. I was kicking, yelling, screaming, spitting at them, cussing, and when they put me on the bus I tried to break the window bashing my skull against it. Ask Caveman from San Jo. That was the bus to San Quentin. As hard as I fought, they finally got me back to this hellhole death trap of a prison Salinas Valley State Prison. And I was immediately placed in the hole. It was December 2000. I never heard nothing from or about Arizona.

I sat in my cell day after day after day in the dark. I kept my back window covered and sat in the dark 24/7. The only time I left my cell was to go to the shower and shave my head. Sometimes the CO would let me have my shaver in my cell and I wouldn't leave my cell. I was devastated — 59 years to life! It didn't sink in. December turned into January 2001, January into February 2001, and so on. That's how it went all year. I filed an appeal, and the court of appeals appointed an appellate defender agency to my case. "Good," I thought, "let him have at it. I'm thru with this case. I'll deal with it when it gets to Federal Court." I knew the court of appeals and the State Supreme court were gonna deny my appeal. But the Federal Court would overturn my conviction. That's how it usually goes.

I finally resolved myself to the fact that this was it, I was never going to leave prison or Ad-Seg ever again. There was no way out and I was stuck in the hellhole "Tomb" for the rest of my life. (I was only 35 years old in February 2001.) Then one morning right after breakfast a CO came and told me to roll it up, I was going out to court. It was August 2001. I was so confused.

I first thought I was going back to Santa Clara County, then I thought I was going to court here being charged with something. I had no idea. The CO just said roll it up. When I got to R&R, no one was there to get me and they wouldn't tell me nothing. They put me in the shower and gave me a brand new jump suit to put on. That's when the U.S. Marshalls arrived. They said I was going to Arizona! I almost cried! Saved! I thought we were gonna drive on the road all the way there. I couldn't believe my luck!

After they shackled me and put me in the car, I said in my heart, "I am never coming back to this horrible, godforsaken, heart wrenching terror of a nightmare, Salinas Valley State Prison. I swore a vow to myself no matter what it takes, I would never return to this prison once I get to Arizona. Whoever said that Salinas Valley State Prison is an escape proof, maximum security level IV prison did not anticipate me being in their escape proof prison. Because there I was sure as daylight going out of that prison right past the guards, right past the gun towers, the lethally charged electric fence that surrounds the entire prison, and the razor wire fences.

There I was on the road again! To think I planned this. To think that while I was going to court being prosecuted for my life I thought of an escape plan and this was part of it. My plan worked and I was being taken to Arizona to face prosecution where I'll be housed in a jail in some old hick town where they won't expect it, and I'll break out of jail

and run for the rest of my life! The Marshalls drove all the way from Salinas State Valley Prison to Travis Air Force base out near Vacaville. The Marshalls stopped at a Wendy's along the way for lunch and I got to eat a Wendy's double cheeseburger with chili fries, a cup of Wendy's chili, a soda and two large Snickers candy Bars.

When we got to Travis AFB, we sat in the car for about two hours next to the bomb shelters covered with green grass. They lie under the earth. I even got to see one of the Air Force One planes the President and Vice president of the U.S. flies in. At around five o' clock p.m. there began arriving next to us vans and busses, all of them parked, sat and waited. Another half an hour in the hot late August sun. Then finally a huge 767 airplane flew in and landed, then taxied up to where we were all parked. It was loud — the two huge plane's engines on each wing and the one at the tail, loud and hot!

Then the passenger door opened and the stairwell extended and a dozen U.S. Marshals exited the plane and surrounded the entire plane with shotguns wearing black bullet proof vest with white block letter on the back that displayed the letters "U.S. Marshal." It was like something out of a movie, I never seen nothing like that in real life. Then, out of the busses and vans came more U.S. Marshals wearing vests carrying shotguns. Prisoners in leg shackles and waist restraints were exchanged. Some left the bus and vans into the planes; some left the plane into the bus and vans — men and women, and gorgeous women at that!

I was the last one on board the huge 767 airliner. Inside the plane looked like any commercial jet airliner with thick cushioned plush velvet seats. There were a dozen U.S. Marshals and after everyone was seated, they handed out everyone big bag lunches filled with peanut butter crackers and apples! When the plane took off it was awesome. Such power. I've taken plane rides before when I was a kid, and that was an experience. But this was a rush! "This was my great escape and I planed it."

When that plane took off I got an adrenaline rush. My heart was racing as if I was really escaping! As soon as we were airborne I was free! There was no way they were taking me back to Salinas Valley State Prison ever! I couldn't believe it. I started munching on my cheese peanut butter crackers and an hour later we landed at a small airport in Victorville, California. The U.S. Marshals were there waiting for someone on the plane. After they took custody of her, we took off and flew at 35,000 feet. We flew over Death Valley, the Mojave Desert, the Sierra mountains and we were going to land at an airport in Santa Barbara but the airport was fogged in, so the pilot had to fly around for several hours over the coast along the beach doing dive bombs up and

down, up and down like the ultimate roller coaster ride. There was a guy in the back of the plane puking his guts out.

Finally we landed and got to let some guys out who were going to spend some time at Lompoc. We left the airport in Santa Barbara at around two p.m. and by then I was tired so I took a little nap. Several hours later, unknown to me, we landed at the airport in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I had never been so far away from California in my life, and after that horrendous, awful experience in prison in California I had from 1994 to 2001, I felt so free. Even though I was still in custody, I was being treated like a human being and the prisoners acted more like civilians than criminals. I was so slick, and so smart I fell in love with myself for being so ingenious and getting myself out of that horrible situation. Anything was better than sitting and rotting in prison in California.

Here I was, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. A thousand miles from Salinas Valley's "Escape Proof" Prison. So much for the concrete cement box they call a cell, and the electric fence. That's where I received my Federal I.D. # is in Oklahoma City. No.#59768008, and that's my number for the rest of my life. They processed all of us. Took our personal clothes in exchange for a tan uniform, took our mug shots, processed us. Over two hundred of us. Me and another guy, a Mexican, were picked out by the Federal correctional officer to volunteer to work. We had to stack all the boxes of people's personal property in a certain area for the Marshals to mail them to people's homes. It was a long job, but after we finished the Marshals hooked us up two big fat sack lunches and a hot croissant they heated in the micro! That was a treat!

The Federal Correctional Center was Pristine with highly polished white tiled floors. There was even ATM Machines on each floor! Can you imagine, ATM machines in a prison?! We took the elevator to several floors and let inmates out. Finally they let me out of the elevator and led me to my cell. The pods were so clean, color TVs, coffee and Juice Bar where you can get free hot coffee and free cold grapefruit or orange juice! There was even a sun deck that looked more like a balcony than a prison yard. When I got to my cell, it resembled a motel room more than a prison cell — white porcelain toilet and sink, large mirror. They even provide small personal use deodorant, shampoo, soap, toothbrush and quality toothpaste. I shaved, brushed my teeth, talked to my celly, then jumped on my top bunk and went to sleep.

I'm the only prisoner in the history of this prison's existence to ever have escaped from
this maximum security level IV prison, and live to tell about it.

MICHAEL PEREZ We're sure a lot of you can relate to losing loved ones while incarcerated. Well, this week we're publishing a beautiful poem sent to us from Folsom in Represa, CA about just that. And though death of a family member can be extremely saddening in any environment, we realize that Michael has a very soothing outlook on what his grandmother's passing means. We appreciate your words, and we're sure she will too. We send our condolences, better late than never. WE also want to add it is nice to have our old friend Michael aka Kid back in The Beat Within. We first met Kid when he was a youngsta in SF/YGC many moons ago.

In Loving Memory

Grandma, may you finally be at peace
Your death, oh the pain to me it brings
But I'm glad the pain for you has ceased
I know you're in a better place
Where you'll see a familiar face
Tell my moms I said hi
And that her baby boy is doin' fine
Damn I miss you so much
But you'll be okay and one day
We'll get back in touch.

RAY SANCHEZ JR. A BWO section doesn't seem complete without people like our next writer. So many great things have been said around our office and in past intros to his pieces that we almost feel like it's cliché to say anything good about him. But hey, let's focus on his latest masterpieces. With *Father's Day* coming up, Ray writes an incredible tribute to his own father. And true to Ray form, he takes an idea that most of us have taken part in as the right way to be, and flips it to put the focus on ourselves rather than everyone else. As expected his words flowed together with such ease that at times we agreed with him simply because of this fact. But the real reason we agree with him is because he knows how to state a belief and give clear cut examples of why he believes it to be true. Not many people have the talent, so when someone comes along that does, we learn to cherish this person. Ray will always be cherished at *The Beat* and hopefully you'll find it in your hearts to cherish him too. And if you don't already know, Ray writes to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison Coalinga, CA.

Still Here

I'm Daly's best kept secret; street creepin' and grimey
Genetically enhanced to be the ultimate crimey
Still alive, ain't dead yet (and don't you forget it)
Blades don't penetrate the Teflon impervious
Makin' ya' nervous?
Bug talk, iced out, stay on purplish?
You might wanna rip out yo' eyeballs and watch yo' mouth
Watch where you steer,
Cus like ruthless by law said,
"We don't floss 'round here,"
Frozen necks pay rent money well spent
Ride hard like muscle cars wit'
Stroker kits, clean bodies wit' no dimples, no dents
No way no tips gon' miss what I spit at
Verbally vicious, the sickest in combat
Simply scum baggish, under handed, straight bandit
Doin' the same thing I do every night
Try to take over the planet
Big brain, big game; educated and upgraded
Initially initiated; gang bangin' affiliated
But no more! No more orders: orders is fo' soldiers
I'm beyond the block
Beyond the glock
I'm crossing all borders
Organizing disorder
(why and what for?)
To get connected and big breaded
Without unloading the holster
Still here, still mackin', impactin' still stackin'
Still alive, I ride, still cause a reaction
Still my own man, still reppin' my faction
Still do it trill big, still after satisfaction!
Still alive, I ride, but still highly unsatisfied
The results ain't optimal, can't front or deny
Still best wit' baretters
Can't see me, can't be me or tax on my cheddar
My letters? Still the same
Pride in the side? Nah, I no longer claim
No longer rearrange dental plates and skate
Dollar bill driven, no reason to hate
Fate propelled
Prison dates and dope sales. Dope mail I stacked well
Dope gamin's a sin cuz it's gamblin'
And the hose always wins
And I plan to be the last man standing
Once the lights go dim
Cats who talk back
Used to get cracked in their glass jaws
By southpaws
Who aim to break chins, cheeks, and eyeballs
Speak true foo; without paintin' false pictures
You can smut game, smut my name
But I still stay invictus
Unconquerable, upfront and honorable
You can take the sav out the 'hood
But can't take the 'hood out the savage, bro.
Your poker face's readable. I suggest that you fold
Before the temperature gets cold
Not from the ice on my wrist
But from the rack that you stacked
As you sit in the mo'gue

To Whom It May Concern:

Father's Day is fast approaching and for many, too many, this day has no meaning. Our fathers have either been a disappointment, abusive, or a non-entity. And for a select few, whether or not we'd like to admit it, we are repeating the cycle. We are locked up. We are stuck on stupid, drunk, or putting in work for the turf. We are twerkin' them girls out there paychecks and panties. We're doing more or less the same things our fathers did, putting ourselves first, and being selfish.

We tell ourselves we're there for our kids cus we take them out every now and then, buy them fits and Nikes, whatever. Spending money will never be the same as spending time with our children. I do not exclude myself from this reprimand. Because even though I began to change my world to revolve around my daughter; even though I took her to museums, zoos, parks, and other outings; even though I struggled to install rudimentary morals and values, I still ended up in prison because I didn't lead by example.

How can I tell my child to duck jail time when I'm committing crimes like real big? How can we tell our sons to respect their mothers and to do well in school when all we so is try to pimp ho's, milk b**ches, cheat on our baby's momma, and drop out of school to slang dope, gang bang, and rap on tracks. Who are we to tell our daughters to respect their bodies when we surround ourselves with women who don't; when we teach them that we place value in loose women and beauty alone? What are we trying to accomplish with this behavior? What are we teaching?

I am one of those lucky few whose father stuck around through thick and thin. But others did not have this treasured advantage, often blaming their upbringing on the lack of parenting received. Yeah, sounds good, but if you're smart enough to realize this may have been a factor in your cruddy attitude, and palm off the blame from your current mistakes on this factor, then you are smart enough to realize it doesn't have to be this way anymore. You, by being aware of what was missing from your past, can now fix your own future by not repeating the same mistakes with your own children as well as rectifying your life for your own sake. Let us not use our fathers as scapegoats. So what if they did screw us up, are we truly going to use this cop out forever? It is time to own up to our share of bullshhhh.

Dad, I'm sorry I effed up. I'm sorry. I'm sorry I didn't do better with my life. I'm sorry I believed I couldn't do better, instead, of realizing I was just too lazy to try. But by seeing my mistakes and being truly penitent, I am taking my first steps as a man in correcting past behavior. I will be a human being and a child of God. I will devote my loyalty to my blood. I will make you proud, pop. Happy Father's Day. Your son

Because even though I began to change my world to revolve around my daughter, even though I took her to museums, zoos, parks, and other outings, even though I struggled to install rudimentary morals and values, I still ended up in prison because I didn't lead by example.

Infidelities

Are commitments, once made, meant to be broken?
 Are we to cheapen words of devotion,
 And love once promises are spoken?
 Betrayal based in lust and passion, and
 Lapses in judgment
 Hurt no less no matter causes or reasons
 When is cheating childish?
 When are we slaves to the heart
 Should we debase ourselves our own self-worth,
 Should we exact revenge by being whores
 Just to even the score?
 When does it all start?
 With a look, fantasy
 Touch, indulgence?
 Can it begin with just one of these actions
 Or must it be all of them?
 Devastated
 Crushed
 Abused by the one we've invested in so much
 Forgiveness?
 It depends on the soul
 Who, with broken heart, must decide alone
 To reprieve, revenge
 Or perhaps, just let go

I Have A Voice!

I am yelling!
 I have a voice and I will be heard
 My views are mine and my beliefs will not bend
 For any but me
 I am a voice, seen as unique
 My representatives do not represent
 And accomplish nothing
 Other than winning popularity contests
 Debate, damn you!
 Show me who you are and what you believe
 Before I give you power, what will you do for me?
 Will you take special interest
 In those interested in saving the youth?
 Or will you become a spokesman
 To special interest groups?
 I don't want to be a politician!
 I need a friend
 I have a voice, and will be heard
 Before you take this power from my hand

DAVID ZAMORA This first time writer out of the Sierra Conservation Center in Jamestown, CA instantly has a place in The Beat to showcase his skills. After reading his pieces, we have no choice but to publish his masterpieces. This guy's tight so he fits right in here with all the potential we work with every week. His first piece is a shout out to those that love him and are waiting for him to come home. In his second piece, he gives us a brief overview of how he got involved with the lifestyle that's responsible for where he is now. And last, but definitely not least, our personal favorite, an observation of what the tongue is capable of. Sometimes we don't think before we speak and it can be detrimental. That's just one more reason why writing can be so effective. So don't forget to hold your 'tongue'. Speaking of which, we just can't hold our tongues when we read the last line of that piece, 'Gracias for taking some of your time and reading this.' No, thank you for taking some of your time and writing this. It's amazing... Don't hesitate to amaze us again.

For My Loved Ones

Hello my name is David Zamora my placaso is "Sapo" I'm from Indio, California but have been living in the city of San Jacinto, CA for the past 17 years and as I write this letter I am sitting in solitary confinement in the prison of Jamestown, Ca. I want to send my hellos to my son, Jose Sapito Zamora and my daughter Crystal Monique Zamora that have been living in Downey, CA along with their mother Monica Aguilera.

I would also like to send my love and respects to the mother of my kids, Jessica Veronica Miranda, along with my two sons Gregorio Guito Zamora and David Jr. Zamora and my two daughters Ana Miranda Zamora and Tanisha Mookie Zamora.

I also want to send my love to the woman that has been there for me since day one and she is my mother that lives in Bakersfield, CA Her name is Nancy Cabrera and to my brother that I have lots of love for that lives in San Jacinto, Ca. His name is Gregorio Pisqui Zamora. Gracias for everything you all have done for me. I really appreciate it and God bless you all. Love always,

Sapo And Pisqui

I grew up in a neighborhood,
 Where you couldn't be a kid,
 You learned from what you seen out there
 And what other gangsters did.
 My momma always worried,
 She tried to do her best.
 It was just a matter of a little time,
 When I would fall in with the rest.
 Pisqui had a low rider.
 I had seen him in the hood,
 Hair slick back, tattooed down,
 And smoking when he could.
 I heard he was from Coachella and Fifty-Second Street
 And that they were bad to the bone.
 Most gangs from Indio
 Knew to leave gangs alone.
 Pisqui had been in prison,
 Maybe six or seven times
 When I was a youngster,
 He was a friend of mine,
 We were driving down Indio Boulevard,
 He taught me to smoke a joint,
 He was talking about his walk by's
 And wanted to make his point,
 He always called me Sapo, he said I'll show you
 something cool.
 That was when I was younger,
 Now I'm in prison too.

The Tongue

Always remember that warriors as myself, can train every kind of animal or bird, that lives in our kingdom but no human being can tame the tongue. It is always ready to pour its deadly poison. Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. An anxious heart weighs a warrior down. But a kind word cheers him up. Please remember this; he who guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself from calamity. Always remember, if you want a happy and good life, please keep control of your tongue and guard your lips from telling lies.

Self control means controlling the tongue! A quick retort can ruin everything. Let your speech always be with the truth, so that you may know how to respond to each human being and please respect every individual for who he is.

Always remember that the tongue is a very small member of the body and it has enormous power for good and evil and must be continually controlled. Gracias for taking some of your time and reading this.

Con Respecto,

BLACKBIRD More of an O.G. Beat writer than almost anyone, Blackbird comes at us once again and gives us something to ponder. In a place where continually bumping your head gets frustrating, he writes about searching for solutions rather than focusing on his problems. And we feel like that's a great idea. So often are we bombarded by life and the obstacles it throws in our faces that we forget to try and do something to make sure we don't run into the same obstacles once we've overcome them. It's liberating to find someone who's aware of this and is taking the necessary steps as of the moment to ensure his longevity. We've seen him on the ins and we've seen him on the outs (we like him better out here), but regardless where he is, he carries an aura that's distinct from everyone else's. Hopefully he'll continue to share his energy with us, but for right now, we'll just be grateful at this work of art until another one comes along. Keep in mind, this piece was written on the day after Christmas last year. Hey, we're only a half a year late. We'll make sure to publish his stuff sooner next time. He wrote this from the county jail in San Francisco.

Dear Beat

First and foremost, I send my utmost respects and gratitude! And I hope this New Year brings you health and prosperity and also for liberty!

I have sent with this letter a contribution to The Beat, and I also send good news of my release, very soon! I have showed a few "soldiers" The Beat and they are very interested, so you'll receive letters soon! Forgive my absence but I first had to "find" myself, which has enabled me to "encourage" others to look within their selves! But whoever said progress is a slow process definitely wasn't talking about "THE BIRD!" But like I said, "I will show and tell." It's 2006, "Yesterday's score doesn't count for today's game, so let's make it happen!"

DAVEY PIERRE We find some of the most intelligent people in the back of The Beat. Not only do they have the courage to step up to the pen and let their voices be heard, but they also speak about things we wouldn't normally think about because our minds are cluttered to fathom such well-thought ideas. In his piece this week Davey Pierre gives us some history about Africans and how they've been crippled, even now, by the horrendous experiences of slavery. It's not fair to strip a people out of their homeland in order to force them to help build a civilization that would turn their noses up at them anyway. He writes to us from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And with every word do we see a man on a mission to better his people while everyone else seems to be counting his people out, including his own people. A hard task, but someone has to attempt it. And who better than a man who can lead with words as he does.

To Be African

By: Dr. Marimba Ali

All people, all over the world, throughout history, have shared in common the fact that they belong to a culture of origin. That is a universal reality. Another equally important universal reality is that there are many, many different cultures in the world and each of them are unique.

The uniqueness of a culture is what gives special ness to its members. They bonded together by their shared culture, which gives them a sense of collective identity.

We are an Afrikaan people, "simply reveals that there are values, traditions, and a heritage that we share because we have a common origin."

The cultural process is naturally an ongoing, which allows people to continuously affirm their connectedness through being linked to their origins.

However, the continuity of our cultural identity has been interrupted cruelly and unnaturally by the experience of slavery. We as people are still suffering from this great crime because we have not been allowed to find our way back to the sense of cultural identity and continuity, which would transform us into a unified and whole people. We have not been able to function in the world with a collective consciousness that naturally imparts a strong sense of cultural roots.

The term "Maafa", (from the book, "Let The Circle Be Unbroken), is a Mahili word for "disaster that we are void using to regain our

A Shoeshine Used To Cost A Dime

There are several types of people in this world, "Those that make things happen, those that watch things happen, and those that sit around and wonder, 'What Happened?'"

As I go into this New Year, I contemplate and drift on a memory, seasons change and so do people, but the memories don't change they just increase! The saddest part is that most of my memories are my years "slipping into darkness" from elementary to the state penitentiary! A scared man can't win so I refuse to lose. But at the same time losers can be winners too! The fact remains that no one was born a "loser", somewhere along the road of life, they made a bad choice or two. But with this New Year comes the opportunity to make better choices and to establish love and respect for oneself, the opportunity to persevere and not look backwards but look forward.

A lot of times, I must remind myself, "Life is a journey, not a destination." It's what we learn on the way! Through the many institutes I've visited during my years of confusion, I believe that God lets some people see so much while he lets others see so little! But I went through those things to become who I am today. And even though I still make a few bad choices, and I continue to bump my head into the same wall, "My experiences have built my character", and I have found confidence in being my own leader and no longer following in the steps of the next man, "because the same things that can make you laugh can make you cry, and the same woman that says I love you, can say goodbye."

I myself realize that in order for my wife or my child to respect me or love me, I must first love and respect myself and conduct myself likewise! And that, starts with utilizing and respecting my freedom which has been a challenge for me. Because from behind walls, there's only so much we can do. But out there on the concrete, the possibilities are unlimited. One man's dream is another man's reality, but each man's dream is unique in its own way! So this year, I'm going to "stop working on my problems and start working on the solutions," I owe that much to myself and so do you!

With respect!

right to tell our own story. "Maafa" refers to the enslavement of our people and to the sustained attempt to dehumanize us because the "Maafa" has disconnected us from our cultural origins. We have remained vulnerable in a social order that does not reflect our cultural identity. We are people of African ancestry living in denial of who we are. We have lost our strength as a people. We are losing our children to a system, which miseducates them. Our families are disintegrating before our eyes. Our numbers are growing in the statistics of drug addiction and incarceration.

Responsible, national, black organizations are seeking remedies for these problems, but we are not speaking with one voice. We need to work together as a family who supports its members and who is responsible for their welfare. We must use the most valuable asset that we have: that is the spirit of our people. It is that spirit that connects us to our African roots.

Slowly, we are awakening to the need to claim our cultural legacy. The term "Sankofa" from Akin tradition in Ghana, West Africa, tells us to return to the source so that we can go forward with strength and clarity. Culture is a powerful tool for inspiring human beings and bringing them together in a concerted "family" action.

Our cultural roots are the most ancient in the world. The spiritual concepts of our ancestors gave birth to religious thought. African people believe in the oneness of the African family through sacred time, which unites the past, the present, and the future.

We created the first civilizations thousands of years ago and they suffered the pain of the "Maafa", and yet they were able to endure the most disastrous and dehumanizing circumstances ever perpetrated against a group of people, only because of the power of the Afrikaan spirit. They did not have the freedom to affirm their cultural heritage. We now have that choice. In the Afrikaan view of life, it is our responsibility to honor their name.

This is perhaps our moment of truth. We must come together as a family. We must do all that we can do to uplift our people. Otherwise, we are still denying who we are and bringing dishonor to our "family name", to our ancestors.

The answer to our social dilemma is the resocialization of our people into the culture value system that affirms our spiritual being. Our ancestors are calling us "home", back to our cultural selves. We must begin the process of Sankofa.

My Intro

Hey, what's crackin' Beat? My name is Derik, I'm 16 and I'm locked up in CYA here in Ione, CA. I heard of The Beat by a homeboy of mine (Green Eyes) who came out of the Alameda County Juvenile Hall. He showed me a copy of The Beat Within and told me I could write and get my poetry published in a weekly issue. He also told me that everybody who is locked up writes to it also.

I'm from the Valley, Manteca, CA and I've been getting locked up since I was a very young teen. I finally made it to CYA. I never thought I would come here but here I am. Been here for a few months and I have eight plus more months to go. I got a year sentence. My max is 7-1/2 years. If I'm good I can get out in Feb., 2007. It's nada.

Well, I look forward to writing to The Beat. Can you send me a copy of the weekly issues? I would appreciate it. Thanks, stay cool. And to everybody locked up, "keep your heads up out there." I'm ghost.

Sincerely...

DERIK P. The Beat Within welcomes Derik P. aka Lil' Smokey, writing from the CYA's Preston Youth Correctional Facility in Ione, Ca. This is his first time writing, and we hope this is not the last time we hear from this talented poet from Manteca, CA. We think these poems are pretty amazing, coming from this sharp sixteen year old. Lastly we would like to thank Green eyes from the 150 Crew for turning this fine poet onto The Beat Within.

You lie without emotion
And yet you say you care
As you give me a generic smile



Lies #2

You said you'd always love me
And remain strong by my side
And when the hard times come around
You'd be down to ride

You said you'd never leave me
Not once in a million years
I said I'd be there to comfort you
And wipe away all your tears

But now you're talkin' to your ex
And tell me you're confused
You say you need to clear your head
but really you need to choose

You said no matter what happens
We could still be friends
You said we could still kick it
But girl, that all depends

You said you'd always do me right
When I looked into your eyes
But will I find out later that
This could be another one of your lies?

Lies #1

You say you understand
But even I know this is a lie
Even though you seem so serious
And look me straight in the eyes
You open your mouth to talk
Before you stop to think
That you lied straight to my face
And you didn't even blink
You say everything will be all right
But I know this can't be true
Nothing ever goes right
After all the shhh I've been through
You lie without emotion
And yet you say you care
As you give me a generic smile
And tell me you'll always be there
You seem to lie so easily
And I've begun to doubt
Can I trust a word you say?
What else do you lie about?

You lie without emotion
And yet you say you care
As you give me a generic smile
And tell me you'll always be there

I myself realize that in order for my wife or my child to respect me or love me, I must first love and respect myself and conduct myself likewise! And that, starts with utilizing and respecting my freedom which has been a challenge for me. Because from behind walls, there's only so much we can do. But out there on the concrete, the possibilities are unlimited.

check out the rest of Blackbird's BWO piece on page 66

